

# 2013 ANGLERS' GUIDE

Compiled by Michael Bergin, associate editor;  
and Sean Harris, guest editor and ODWC intern



COURTESY OF FUTURE BASS TEAM TRAIL

Future Bass Team Trail chairman Joe Copeland, left, helps Marco Vaca and Doyle Idleman lift their winning stringer of fish Jan. 26 at Lake of the Arbuckles.

The house where I grew up was nestled in the middle of a subdivision, but that quiet neighborhood was broken up by a patch of woods and a meandering creek full of catfish and sunfish. I didn't realize just how good I had it. I bet I fished every day, and even when I slept at night I was no more than 100 yards away from fishable water.

If I needed adventure beyond that, my family had a little private fishing getaway about 30 minutes away in Logan Co. The two ponds there were teeming with bass, crappie and bluegill, and there was no end to the fun you could have there on that little 40-acre piece of ground.

While reminiscing is fun, there is no need to miss the "good old days," because there is excellent fishing to be discovered all over the state today.

Personnel with the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation Fisheries Division work year-round to help make Oklahoma one of the best places to be an angler. And there are frequent opportunities to see their management efforts pay off.

Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than at Arbuckle Lake, where this year tournament anglers on two successive weekends hauled in stringers in excess of 40 pounds each!

Forty pounds of fish would be significant in and of itself, but these stringers were comprised of just five fish each

— an average of more than eight pounds per fish!

According to Gene Gilliland, assistant chief of fisheries for the Wildlife Department, this is no coincidence.

"The ingredients that you need to produce trophy bass are present in Arbuckle right now," said Gene Gilliland, assistant chief of fisheries for the Wildlife Department. "I really like seeing how Arbuckle has become quite a success story from a fisheries management perspective."

While Arbuckle Lake hasn't always been considered an outstanding bass honey hole, the Wildlife Department resumed stocking the Florida strain largemouth bass in the lake after having stopped for a time. According to Gilliland, those fish are coming of age now, growing to large sizes and making for outstanding fishing tales for anglers to tell around the boat ramp.

"The fish that we stocked, or the offspring of those stocked fish, are now turning into these trophy bass that are being caught on a pretty regular basis for about the past three years," Gilliland said.

But the hard work doesn't stop at Arbuckle. The Department is busy year-round producing fish in hatcheries, stocking fish in state waters, operating successful urban fishing programs, building and submerging habitat, creating and maintaining fishing access at lakes and other fisheries, surveying and monitoring fish populations, purchasing waters for anglers to fish and more. And the Department's law enforcement division works to enforce the fishing laws of the state to make sure that angling remains a top sport in the state.

What I am getting at is that there is an entire fleet of folks working to make sure that you and me

don't just have to sit around reminiscing about the good old days of fishing when we were kids. We can go right now. Somewhere in the state — and most likely somewhere close by — there is a fish just waiting to hit your line.

Use the pages in this Anglers' Guide to learn about some of the most popular fish to try to catch in Oklahoma. You can even scan the QR code on this page or log on to the URL provided to access a range of information and data collected in the past year from fisheries personnel. They've conducted surveys and stocked millions of fish, and you can access the data on the Department's website for free.



COURTESY OF BACKYARD BASSIN TOURNAMENT TRAIL

Jeff Reynolds and Johnny Thompson hoist their winning limit of largemouth bass Jan. 19 at Lake of the Arbuckles.

Whatever your fishing style, there is most likely someplace to embrace it here in Oklahoma. Our invitation to you is to take up the opportunity to go fishing this year. Take someone with you as well. Buy a fishing license and have a blast. It's good for the fish, and it is good for you.

—Michael Bergin, associate editor



Scan this QR code with your smartphone or log on to <http://wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/surveys.htm> access a range of information and survey data collected in the past year by fisheries personnel.

WILDLIFEDEPARTMENT.COM



### The Fish:

Sunfish such as the bluegill, redear, hybrid, green and longear are the most abundant game fish in Oklahoma. These small game fish are important to the ecosystem and can be an important learning tool for future anglers.

### Daily Limit:

None in areas without special regulations.

Sunfish bite almost any bait presented. Worms, crickets, grasshoppers, corn, hotdogs and sometimes even a bare hook during a feeding frenzy.

Kids can enjoy catching sunfish for hours. A small rod and reel or cane pole with a box of worms can teach kids the basics of fishing: baiting a hook, casting a line and hook removal.

The sunfish is a smaller game fish and has no daily state limits, which means a stringer full of decent sized sunfish can result in a fish fry for family and friends. Flaky, tender meat stands up well to pan and deep-frying or baking and broiling

and is tasty served hot or cold. They are easy to catch and fun for the whole family. Learning to catch sunfish can be a great foundation for learning to catch other fish species.

### 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 and docks 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. Pinch off a small piece of worm and drop a line around docks where sunfish may be schooling.

Ultra-light gear and tackle or fly rods can enhance your sunfish angling experience as the sunfish may be small, but is still a strong-fighting fish, pound-for-pound.

Find good fishing holes through the Wildlife Department's Close to Home Fishing program. Chances are the sunfish 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.

**Bluegill Sunfish**  
**Rod and Reel State Record**  
**Weight:** 2 lbs., 6 oz.  
**Length:** 12-3/4"  
**Girth:** 14-1/2"  
**Where:** Kay Co. Pond  
**When:** 5-8-87  
**Angler:** Tom Shorter

**Green Sunfish**  
**Rod and Reel State Record**  
**Weight:** 2 lbs., 7 oz.  
**Length:** 13"  
**Girth:** 14-1/4"  
**Where:** Pontotoc Co. Pond  
**When:** 10-16-72  
**Angler:** Eddie Shulanberger

**Hybrid Sunfish**  
**Rod and Reel State Record**  
**Weight:** 1 lbs., 14 oz.  
**Length:** 12-3/8"  
**Girth:** 13-7/8"  
**Where:** Bryan Co. Pond  
**When:** 5-24-97  
**Angler:** Hal Smith

**Redear Sunfish**  
**Rod and Reel State Record**  
**Weight:** 2 lbs., 1 oz.  
**Length:** 12-3/4"  
**Girth:** 13"  
**Where:** Logan Co. Pond  
**When:** 11-15-73  
**Angler:** Ruby Lee Farmer

Kids can enjoy catching sunfish for hours. A small rod and reel or cane pole can teach kids the basics of fishing.

### Summary of Species Stocked in Public Waters from January through December 2012

Blue Catfish	400
Bluegill	26,941
Brown Trout	61,762
Channel Catfish	315,350
Florida Largemouth Bass	1,742,231
Hybrid Striped Bass	515,938
Hybrid Sunfish	6,920
Northern Largemouth Bass	9,100
Paddlefish	50,551
Rainbow Trout	294,865
Redear Sunfish	153,850
Sauger	199,632
Saugeye	701,833
Striped Bass	270,001
Walleye	11,233,847
<b>Total Stocked</b>	<b>15,583,447</b>

KRISTEN GILLMAN

## The Fish:

Rainbow and brown trout can be caught in Oklahoma even though each are native to places far from the sooner state. These species of trout have been successfully introduced to Oklahoma waters, effectively creating a fishing opportunity that at one time didn't exist in the state. 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 38-41 of the current "Oklahoma Fishing Guide" for complete details.

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-



*At state-designated trout fisheries, rainbow trout are stocked every few weeks throughout the trout fishing season — which is year-round at some locations, such as the Lower Mountain Fork River, and seasonal in those areas where trout cannot survive past winter.*

prepared baits (where legal) such as small earthworms, minnows as well as 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. 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 fishing combines scenery, tradition and technique into one activity

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 Medicine Park. 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 Web site at [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com), so you always know when to go.

## How to catch 'em

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

it drift down through the calm water on the downstream side.

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, you must keep

**Rainbow Trout**  
**Rod and Reel State Record**  
**Weight:** 10 lbs., 4 oz.  
**Where:** Lower Illinois River  
**When:** 7-3-66  
**Angler:** Billy Payne

**Brown Trout**  
**Rod and Reel State Record**  
**Weight:** 17 lbs., 4.6 oz.  
**Where:** Lower Mountain Fork River  
**When:** 4-10-05  
**Angler:** Jason Archie

**The Fish:**

Oklahoma is home to largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass — all of which are considered black bass. The black bass is the most popular species in the state and can be found in lakes, streams, ponds and rivers throughout Oklahoma.

**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.

The black bass can be caught nearly anywhere anglers cast a line. Oklahoma has a reputation around the nation for growing big bass in large populations. In fact the Bassmaster Classic was held in Oklahoma last month, bringing bass enthusiasts from around the country to see the quality bass the state has to offer. The Classic helped bring millions of dollars into the Tulsa area economy and provided Grand Lake with new facilities that locals can use for years to come.

**How to catch 'em**

Black bass hit live and artificial baits with authority and aggression and, pound for pound, fight as hard as any fish in the state. Anglers have found many techniques that catch bass and continue to present new styles each year. Black bass are predators and any bait that can mimic their prey can be effective. Jigs, spinners, surface lures, rattletails, 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. The season, water temperature and time of day all play a role in determining where the bass will be located. 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 honeyholes. Generally, work lures faster in warm water and slower in cold water.

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 take 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 more harvest of 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.



*A young Oklahoma angler displays a largemouth bass he caught at Lake Murray in 2012. Black bass — which include largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass — can be found in lakes, ponds and rivers across the state and offer some of the most exciting and sought after fishing action available in Oklahoma.*

**Largemouth**  
 Rod and Reel State Record  
 Weight: 14 lbs., 12.3 oz.  
 Where: Cedar Lake  
 When: 3-21-12  
 Angler: Benny Williams Jr.

**Smallmouth Bass**  
 Rod and Reel State Record  
 Weight: 8 lbs., 7 oz.  
 Where: Lawtonka  
 When: 3-21-12  
 Angler: Ryan Wasser

**Spotted Bass**  
 Rod and Reel State Record  
 Weight: 8 lbs., 2 oz.  
 Where: Pittsburg Co. Pond  
 When: 6-27-58  
 Angler: O. J. Stone

# BASSMASTER CLASSIC

## Makes Big Splash at Grand Lake

The best competitive bass anglers in the world converged onto Grand Lake of the Cherokees near Tulsa Feb. 22-24 to compete for \$500,000 and the title of Bassmaster Classic champion. The win went to Cliff Pace of Petal, Miss.

The event was the Bassmaster Classic, and it was one of the most successful Classics ever. More than 100,000 visitors packed the various venues of the Classic, ranging from the daily weigh-ins at the BOK Center and the Expo held at the Tulsa Convention Center to the actual launching of the boats onto the lake in the mornings. Tens of millions of dollars were pumped into the economies of Tulsa, Grove and the surrounding communities around the lake, and every fish caught and weighed for the event, which totaled 548, were released back into the lake alive.

“It really is the top prize in professional bass fishing,” said Gene Gilliland, assistant chief of fisheries for the Wildlife Department. “It’s easily the biggest fishing event that will ever come to Oklahoma.”

The Classic was a starting point for a lot of things that will be happening in the Grand Lake area and ‘Green Country’ in the future. As big as Grand Lake is and as popular as it is, it

never really had big-time boat launching facilities prior to the Classic. That is, until the City of Grove stepped up and worked with the Wildlife Department and other partners to change that — not only for the Bassmaster Classic, but for all of us going forward now that the Classic is behind us.

Wolf Creek Park in Grove was renovated prior to the Classic to provide six boat ramp lanes, parking for up to 300, restrooms, pavilions, courtesy docks and more. The ongoing, two-phase project will result in a multi-million dollar, first-class facility for the public to use.

“This facility being built at Grand Lake is not just for the big level tournaments,” Gilliland said. “But the City of Grove is trying to make something that the local fishermen can use so that they have some nicer facilities to be able to do some of their weigh-ins.”

Over the course of the two-phase project, the Wildlife Department will contribute about \$3 million, which will be combined with several million dollars provided by the City of Grove, Oklahoma Department of Transportation and the Grand River Dam Authority — which operates the lake. The second phase of the project could include other partners as well.

“It’s a big deal,” Gilliland said. “I’m hoping that the folks at Lake Eufaula and at Lake Texoma and Ft. Gibson and some of our other major reservoirs get really jealous about seeing all this, because we’d like to do this same kind of project at those lakes and put in some really first-class facilities at other places around the state.”

Log on to [wildlifedepartment.com](http://wildlifedepartment.com) for updated information on winners and other Bassmaster Classic news.



Wildlife Department fisheries personnel helped with the live release of fish back into Grand Lake following each weigh-in of the Bassmaster Classic that took place in February. All of the fish caught and weighed during the tournament were released alive! That’s 548 bass that could be caught another day.

**The Fish:**

The white bass is Oklahoma's state fish, and is known for the "run" it makes in the spring when the fish leaves the reservoirs and makes its way into creeks and tributaries to spawn.

When the "sand bass" make their way up stream a feeding frenzy begins and can leave an angler with sore arms and thumbs from fighting and taking fish off the hook over and over again. The white bass will hit jigs, spinners, minnows or anything else resembling small bait fish.

**Daily Limit:**

None in areas without special regulations.

**How to catch 'em**

Telltale signs that its time to go fishing for white bass include blooming redbud and dogwood 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 (northeast) 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****Rod and Reel State Record**

Weight: 5 lbs., 4 oz.

Where: Lake Eufaula

When: 10-26-84

Angler: Paul Grace

**WHERE THE WHITE BASS RUN**

By Daniel Griffith

ODWC Information and Education Specialist



Springtime brings 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 spring, and the fast and furious feeding frenzies can be among the most rewarding fishing times of the year. You need only arm yourself with an assortment of jigs and a good rod and reel. Each region of the state can lay claim to some of the best white bass fishing in Oklahoma.

**Eufaula (Central)**

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 downstream, depending on the flow, to find where the white bass are stacked up. Fishing surfacing schools in the central pool as well as in the North Canadian and South Canadian portions of the lake while trolling also offers great chances at white bass.

**Broken Bow (Southeast)**

Biologist Kyle James claims that good habitat and an excellent supply of threadfin shad make Broken Bow the prime spot to catch white bass in southeast Oklahoma. White bass in the spring can be found north of the lake in the Mountain Fork River, and bank access

and camping are near many of the popular places to catch a few sandies.

**Tenkiler (East Central)**

"Thousands of people from across the state and from other states have come to Tenkiller year after year to catch white bass during the spring," biologist Josh Johnston said. Although he has noticed a decline in the number of anglers fishing Tenkiller over the years, Johnston said he believes the white bass fishing is as good as, if not better than, it has been in the past. Horseshoe Bend north of the lake provides a prime location for catching the spring run at its peak.

**Fort Gibson (Northeast)**

Fort Gibson in northeastern Oklahoma provides some great bank access along with boat access to springtime white bass fishing. Chouteau Creek at the State Highway 412 bridge and farther north where Pryor Creek crosses U.S. 69 provide some great bank access for those unable to fish from a boat, said Brad Johnston, northeast region fisheries technician.

**Lake Texoma (South Central)**

Cliff Sager, south central region senior biologist, said, "Texoma white bass are often overlooked because of the lake's great striped bass population." Sager said that if conditions are right, the spring spawning run is as good as anywhere else in the state. Pennington Creek provides the best place to catch white bass during the spring run.

**Kaw Lake (North Central)**

The hot spots during springtime are north of the lake in the Arkansas River and northeast on Little Beaver Creek.

**Waurika (Southwest)**

"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. Cofer said the success of the white bass in Waurika is because of the lake's high abundance of shad.



The hybrid striper (left) is hatched in fisheries labs by crossing a white bass with a striper (right). Note the hybrid has a slightly arched back with some broken lines down its body. The striper, on the other hand, does not have an arched back and features strong, unbroken dark lines.

## The Fish:

Catching a striped bass in Oklahoma before the 1950s would have truly been a far fetched fishing story. "Stripers" are native to the Atlantic Ocean and would move into fresh water streams to spawn. Fisheries biologists in Oklahoma and many other states introduced the striped bass to their waters and since then the fish has thrived in its new environment. Today, Oklahoma has some of the best striped bass fishing in the nation with some fish reaching 40 pounds or more.

When fisheries biologists cross these fish with Oklahoma's native white bass in hatchery labs, the result is 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. Both the striped bass and the hybrid are big and aggressive, which makes planning a trip to catch one of the fighters a must.

## 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.

## Striped Bass

Rod and Reel State Record  
Weight: 47 lbs., 8 oz.  
Where: Lower Illinois River  
When: 6-10-96  
Angler: Louis Parker

## Striped Bass Hybrid

Rod and Reel State Record  
Weight: 23 lbs., 4 oz.  
Where: Altus-Lugert Lake  
When: 4-1-97  
Angler: Paul Hollister

## How to catch 'em

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. 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.

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 number 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 Fish:**

Channel, blue and flathead catfish are the most sought after species of catfish in Oklahoma. Each differ in appearance and angling techniques, but all fight hard and are great to eat.

**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.

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. Blue and flathead catfish can grow to 100 pounds or more.

**How to catch 'em**

For channel catfish, try using worms, crayfish, prepared baits and cut shad. When fishing for blue catfish use cut or live shad as that is its primary diet. Flathead catfish are finicky feeders and can be the greatest challenge of the three. Try using live sunfish, shad or small bullheads as bait. Try 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 also can prove successful. Local municipal lakes and farm ponds managed for angling are often loaded with catfish. Streams and fishing 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. 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.



BLAKE PODHAJSKY

**Channel Catfish**  
 Rod and Reel State Record  
 Weight: 35 lbs., 15 oz.  
 Where: Taft Lake  
 When: 9-11-05  
 Angler: Gary Doak, Jr.

**Blue Catfish**  
 Rod and Reel State Record  
 Weight: 98 lbs.  
 Where: Lake Texoma  
 When: 11-11-04  
 Angler: Billy Nabors

**Flathead Catfish**  
 Rod and Reel State Record  
 Weight: 78 lbs., 8 oz.  
 Where: El Reno City Lake  
 When: 5-11-10  
 Angler: Richard Williams



DANNY BOWEN

**Daily Limit:**

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

Once you find one, you can often catch several in a row from the same spot.

White and flakey, crappie meat is highly regarded as one of the best tasting fish in Oklahoma.

Crappies compete well against other predator fish and, as a result, can and should be harvested heavily.

**How to catch 'em**

Crappie feed on small baitfish so try live minnows and small jigs throughout the year. 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. When crappie are spawning try shallow water around coves, rip-rap and brush. Later on in the year, fish deeper waters around submerged structure. 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.

**The Fish:**

White and black crappie can be caught year around and are one of the most popular game fish in Oklahoma. The seasoned angler can locate crappie any month of the year, especially near submerged structure. Once the angler finds the depth and structure the crappie are holding at, the fish can be caught for hours.

**Black Crappie**

Rod and Reel State Record

Weight: 4 lbs., 10 oz.

Where: Ottawa Co. Pond

When: 6-16-74

Angler: Rollie Williams

**White Crappie**

Rod and Reel State Record

Weight: 4 lbs., 15 oz.

Where: Kingfisher Co. Pond

When: 5-4-91

Angler: Frank Robinson

**WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL IMPROVE FISH HABITAT IN STATE LAKES**

By Don Brown

Information & Education Specialist

Hordes of anglers take to the public waters of Oklahoma each year to catch their share of crappie, but few may realize just how much effort goes into making sure that public crappie fishing hotspots stay attractive to fish so that anglers can catch them.

Cliff Sager, chairman of the Department's Fish Habitat Committee and south central region fisheries biologist, said the Department manages fish attractor sites in more than 100 lakes throughout Oklahoma.

"The goal of this program is to improve angling success by creating man-made fish shelters for anglers to use," Sager said. "When water temperatures drop, crappie tend to be less active and hold tight to the brush. Wintertime

crappie fishing can be hot around standing timber and sunken brush piles."

Fish tend to gather around the attractors during colder weather, and by fishing near these attractors, anglers are likely to improve their odds of success.

Sager said the Department constructs and refurbishes underwater fish attractors using various materials including trees, rocks, pallets, plastics or a combination of items. The Eastern red cedar tree, an invasive species in Oklahoma, is generally unwanted by landowners and is readily available. It is common for Department personnel to cut down these trees and use them at fish attractor sites.

The Department also uses artificial bush-like structures called spider blocks as fish attractors. Spider blocks are con-

crete blocks with eight to 10 black polyethylene pipes arrayed upward from the top, which makes them resemble a spider.

"These structures hold fish, don't break down over time, and are virtually impossible to get a lure stuck on," Sager said. For those reasons, spider blocks generally hold favor with fishermen and biologists alike.

During 2012, personnel with the Department's Fisheries Division rebuilt or added underwater fish attractors in several state lakes.

To see a list of all state lakes where fish attractors are installed and to download GPS coordinates for those attractor sites, go online to [wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/wheretofish.htm](http://wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/wheretofish.htm) and click on "Fish Attractor Locations."

KRISTEN GILLMAN



NELS RODEFELD

*Even a large surf rod bends to the weight and the force of one of Oklahoma's "river monsters." Paddlefish, or "spoonbills" are large and they are in charge if you don't reel hard, fast and with enough strength to bring one to shore or onboard.*

## The Fish:

Odd looking and fun to catch is the best way to describe this large fish that only feeds on microscopic organisms. Easily reaching 30 lbs. or 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.

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 to catch 'em

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 28 in the current "Oklaho-

ma 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.

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.

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



NELS RODEFELD

The "official" Lake Record Fish photo of country music star and entertainer Blake Shelton and his paddlefish. Caught in April 2010, the fish weighed 40 lbs. His Lake Hudson record was since broken by Broken Arrow angler William Zimmerman's 73 lb. fish. The state record paddlefish, caught by Aaron Stone from the Arkansas River in 2011, dwarfed them both. It weighed in at 125 lbs. 7 oz., was 55 inches long and almost 42 inches in girth. To see this fish, scan this QR code with your smart phone, or log on to <http://wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/restrictedfish.htm>.



**The Fish:**

Walleye and saugeye have been successfully stocked in Oklahoma reservoirs and have become popular game fish around the state. Targeting walleye and saugeye can be a rewarding fishing trip as both are known to put up a fight and make a great meal. Walleye were stocked in major Oklahoma reservoirs in the 1950s and have been raised in Oklahoma hatcheries. When fisheries biologists cross a female walleye with a male sauger, the result is a saugeye, a 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.

Walleye and saugeye put up a vicious fight when hooked and are unique in appearance. Be careful when handling, do not "lip" this fish like a bass as walleye and saugeye have a mouth full of sharp teeth. Walleye and saugeye have

thick, white and flaky fillets that can be fried or grilled. 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, and the hybrid will have spots and bars in the webbing of the fin.

**How to catch 'em**

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 pre-

**Walleye**

**Rod and Reel State Record**  
**Weight:** 12 lbs., 13 oz.  
**Where:** Robert S. Kerr  
**When:** 5-8-04  
**Angler:** Kerry Karter

**Saugeye**

**Rod and Reel State Record**  
**Weight:** 10 lbs., 10 oz.  
**Where:** Fort Cobb Lake  
**When:** 2-24-06  
**Angler:** Curt Wilkerson

fer to spawn on riprap along dams and bridges on big lakes.

Try catching walleye on jigs tipped with large red worms or lures resembling shad. Walleye naturally prey on bait fish, insects, larvae, night crawlers, crayfish, and snails. 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.



*Oklahoma offers walleye and saugeye fishing opportunities in lakes across the state. These fish provide exciting fishing opportunity and are known widely to make delicious table fare.*

**ANGLERS PAY THE WAY**



The Sport Fish Restoration program is a tremendous example of a true partnership between private industries, state governments, the federal government and the anglers and boaters. The manufacturers of rods, reels fishing tackle and fish finders pay an excise tax at first sale. Additionally, gasoline fuels are taxed and a portion of those dollars from motorboats and small engines are dedicated to the Sport Fish Restoration Program. The federal government collects these taxes and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service administers and disburses these funds to the state fish and wildlife agencies. Anglers and boaters ultimately pay these taxes through the purchase of products. It is these same people who benefit from these funds as the states must spend the money on sport fish habitat restoration/development, population management, user access and facilities and education.