



TEXOMA WASHITA ARM Wildlife Management Area

BY RICH FULLER

Its headwaters are found way out in the Texas panhandle. From its dusty and dry birthplace, the Washita River snakes generally southeast some 626 miles (including 580 miles within the state), making it one of Oklahoma's longest rivers.

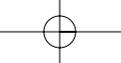
Until the end of World War II, the Washita joined forces with the mighty Red River near the town of Platter in Marshall County. However, with the construction of Dennison dam on the Red River in 1946, the waters of Lake Texoma have now filled up the Washita's watershed several miles to the north. Today, the Washita River basically ends and Lake Texoma begins at a spot just a few miles from Tishomingo in Johnston County.

Throughout recorded history, the Washita River has been famous, or infamous depending on your per-

spective, for its habit of flooding every few years. Despite the hardships endured by farmers and ranchers losing crops and even acres of their land to its temperamental channel, the Washita's many flood episodes have been beneficial to a host of wildlife species. By looking at aerial photography and geological maps of the Washita, it's easy to spot numerous oxbows and cutoff lakes that were formed as a result of flood events. Prior to the construction of man-made impoundments by early settlers, these natural wetlands were the only ponds or lakes within Oklahoma. Historical accounts of Oklahoma pioneers documented these wetland areas as a Mecca for migrating waterfowl and many other wildlife species.

Thanks to the foresight of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation (ODWC), the U.S. Army





PAUL MOORE

Although present in only limited numbers, diligent hunters can find turkeys scattered across the upland portions of the WMA.

Corps of Engineers and the United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), a large area at the junction of the Washita River with Lake Texoma was set aside for the benefit of wildlife and sportsmen. Comprising a total area of more than 31,000 acres on three separate areas, the Texoma/Washita Arm Wildlife Management Area (WMA), and the adjacent Tishomingo Wetland Management Unit (WMU) are managed by the Wildlife Department. The Tishomingo National Wildlife Refuge lies adjacent to the Tishomingo WMU and is operated by the USFWS. Among numerous game species such as whitetail deer, furbearers and wild turkey, these areas are best known for their waterfowl hunting opportunities.

“The most unique thing about the Washita Arm WMA and Tishomingo WMU is the number and diversity of old oxbows and overflow areas,” said Dennis Geary, area biologist. “There’s about 17 natural wetlands on the area with the Randolph Lake complex being the largest. Depending upon rainfall, these areas typically hold good numbers of migrat-

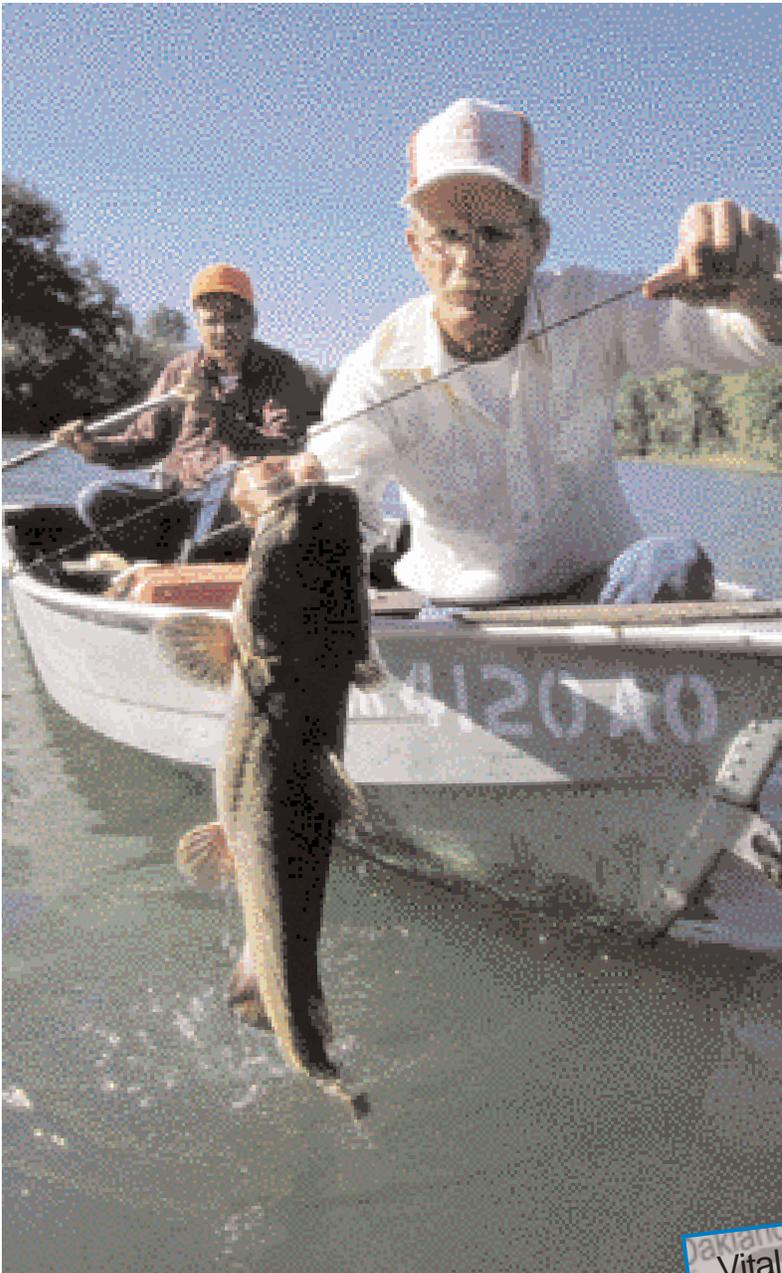
ing waterfowl each fall.”

According to Geary, the best years for waterfowl and waterfowl hunting have followed periods of floods, which help create “green-tree” type of waterfowl habitat.

“These areas always hold some waterfowl, however, our most productive seasons have followed floods which create excellent flooded timber areas with floating acorns and pecans which really attract and hold the birds,” he added.

AREA DESCRIPTION:

Texoma/Washita Arm WMA and the Tishomingo WMU covers 13,286 acres in southern Johnston County. The areas are located southwest of Tishomingo. State Hwy 99, also known as US 377, bisects the two areas with Texoma Washita Arm to the west and Tishomingo WMU to the east. The areas consist of mainly flood plain and river bottom habitats. About 75 percent is wetland type of habitat and is wet for some periods throughout the



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The Washita River as well as the many oxbows of the river can offer some first-rate catfishing opportunities.

year. The surrounding upland areas consist of native bottomland timber and some grasslands.

FISHING OPPORTUNITIES:

Fishing opportunities exist on the area's many small ponds and lakes, primarily for catfish and crappie. The Washita River offers good bank access around three bridge areas. There are no boat ramps on the river itself, however small craft such as a jonboat or canoe can be used. The river, at times, offers excellent fishing for blue catfish.

Nearby Lake Texoma is famous for its excellent striped bass fishery, with good opportunities for black bass, crappie and catfish species.

GAME SPECIES OF INTEREST:

Because of the wetland habitat on the WMA and WMU, bobwhite quail are only present in fair numbers. Whitetail deer, however, are present in good numbers but are heavily sought after.

Deer hunting is open to all hunting seasons at the Texoma/Washita Arm WMA, with the exception that the 150-acre Turkey Creek Waterfowl Development Unit (WDU) is only open to archery deer hunting.

Rio Grande wild turkeys can be found in the more upland portions, but are only present in limited numbers.

Small game hunting can be very productive on the areas, however, wet areas can limit accessibility. Both cottontail and swamp rabbits are present in fair numbers as well as coyotes, bobcats and raccoons.

NON GAME SPECIES OF INTEREST:

In recent years, the Texoma/Washita Arm WMA has seen an increasing population of feral hogs, which offer sports-

Vital Statistics

- 13,286 total acres
- Area is characterized by bottomland hardwoods.
- Located southwest of Tishomingo, OK.
- Area Biologist is Dennis Geary. He also manages Fobb Bottom WMA and Chickasaw National Recreation Area. His phone number is (405) 823-8383 and his email address is tex-wma@brightnetok.net

men additional hunting opportunities. Feral hogs provide a worthy challenge to even seasoned hunters. Persistence, patience and good woodsmanship are generally required to be successful. Consult area regulations for legal methods of taking feral hogs.

Bald eagles winter in all areas of the WMA. Additionally, flocks of American wood storks are attracted to oxbows and overflow areas beginning in August.

WATERFOWLING ON TEXOMA/WASHITA WMA

Waterfowl hunting on the Texoma/Washita Arm WMA is open for all legal shooting hours on every day of the week during all waterfowl seasons. However, the Turkey Creek Waterfowl Development Unit (WDU) closes at 1:00 p.m. daily.

DESCRIPTION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES:

Management efforts focus on extensive agricultural plantings as well as producing native foods such as ragweed and sunflower. When conditions allow, aerial seeding of millet in late summer can provide excellent food sources for migrating ducks and geese. In addition, some small wildlife plots are planted annually. Prescribed burns are conducted when conditions permit.

CAMPING AND FACILITIES:

Two designated primitive camping areas are offered on the area, and both lodging and restaurants are also available in Tishomingo. A 100-yard shooting range with shooting bench can be found on the south side of the area.

LODGING

Lodging is available at nearby Tishomingo or at several locations adjacent to Lake Texoma (log onto: http://www.laketexomaonline.com/html/lo_dging.asp for list of lake area accommodations).

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Sloughs, oxbows, cut-offs – no matter what you call them, the Texoma-Washita Arm WMA can offer excellent duck hunting when the conditions are right.