



*The Black Bass Program was established to direct specific attention to Arkansas' most sought-after game fish: largemouth, smallmouth, and spotted (Kentucky) bass, collectively. The primary purpose of the program is to enhance black bass fishing opportunities for anglers through stockings, population monitoring and research, habitat improvement, and tournament assistance.*

### **April – June 2008**

The Black Bass Program (BBP) has been busy this spring with a number of activities including: electrofishing on several lakes, boat-stocking black bass fingerlings into lakes Ouachita and DeGray, taking genetic and largemouth bass virus (LMBV) samples from hatchery broodstock, and attending meetings and/or giving presentations to the Hot Springs Village Anglers Club, Arkansas B.A.S.S. Federation (ABF), The Bass Federation (TBF), Arkansas Bass Association (ABA), and the Arkansas Black Bass Coalition (ABBC). The BBP also assisted FLW Outdoors with fish life support at the BFL All-American on Lake Hamilton.

### **Bass Sampling**

The BBP was able to assist District 8 Biologists Stuart Wooldridge and Brett Hobbs with their electrofishing on Lake Ouachita at Lena Landing, Yorktown Bay, Avant, and Brady Mtn.

We were also able to assist D8 with electrofishing samples on DeGray at Brushy Creek, Arlie Moore and Iron Mtn. areas.



BBP Electrofishing Boat

Sampling on area lakes this spring was quite challenging with the lakes 8-10 feet high due to all of the rainfall. The fish seemed to be somewhat scattered but we were still successful at catching good numbers of bass of various sizes in our samples.

The BBP along with Fish Pathologist Kelly Winningham were able to assist District 4 Biologists Jeff Farwick and Lee Holt with electrofishing samples on Marion McCollum Greenlee Lake near Brinkley. Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) and genetic tissue samples were collected as well as otoliths or ear bones for age and growth analysis.



Kelly and Kevin holding a nice pair of Greenlee bass

As the below picture illustrates, the fish were in excellent pre-spawn condition and were found to be carrying a good amount of fat in their body cavity.



Kevin with a very healthy female Greenlee bass

The Andrew Hulseley Hatchery in Hot Springs is the only state owned hatchery that raises Florida largemouth bass (FLMB). The hatchery is able to utilize brood fish (sexually mature adult bass) for about five years before they get too big and expensive to keep fed.

These fish occasionally become available for us to stock into public water bodies. This year, we decided to stock some of these older brood stock into Greenlee and Bois D' arc since we had to sacrifice fish from these lakes for biological samples. Eighty-eight FLMB brooders were stocked into Greenlee and thirty-five were stocked into Bois D' arc lake.

The AGFC has a contract with Arkansas State University (ASU) for analyzing the genetics of our bass populations using individual fin clips. The BBP assisted the Fish Pathologist with extracting genetic samples from some hatchery brood fish from both the William Donham Hatchery near Corning and also the Andrew Hulseley Hatchery in Hot Springs. These tissue samples will provide ASU with both pure Northern largemouth (Donham) and pure Florida largemouth (Hulseley) samples for future genetic testing control purposes.

### **Fish Stocking**

Our hatcheries again did a fantastic job in producing bass this year for stocking public waters.

The Andrew Hulseley hatchery again produced a good crop of Tennessee reservoir-strain smallmouth for stocking at Lake Ouachita. Several members of the ABBC were on hand to assist with the boat stocking of 100,870 fingerlings into areas of good habitat between Point 1 and the Dam.

The ABBC also assisted D8 and the BBP with the boat stocking of FLMB at Ouachita. Lake Ouachita received 100,450 fingerlings in the Rabbittail/ Buckville area. This is the second year of an eight year stocking program of FLMB into Lake Ouachita. Approximately 196K FLMB have been stocked in this area of Ouachita in the last two years.



ABBC President Rick Farmer boat stocking FLMB in Lake Ouachita

Lake DeGray received its third stocking of FLMB in as many years with 93,890 fingerlings being stocked into the Brushy Creek arm of the lake. As mentioned before, both Ouachita and DeGray are being stocked with FLMB in these areas for eight years to determine the suitability of stocking FLMB into isolated areas of large reservoirs. Thanks to Billy Huddleston for providing a boat to help with the stocking.



Billy Huddleston boat stocking FLMB in Lake DeGray

The Joe Hogan Hatchery at Lonoke provided 101,244 Northern largemouth bass fingerlings that were boat stocked out of Tompkins Bend access on Lake Ouachita. We would like to thank ABBC President Rick Farmer for his assistance with this effort.



ABBC boat stocking LMB in Lake Ouachita

### Meetings, Presentations, etc.

The BBP attended a meeting with the ABBC at Smokin' in Style in Hot Springs in which an update on the Lake Ouachita Management Plan (LOMP) goals and objectives were discussed.

Kevin also gave a presentation to the Hot Springs Village Anglers club on 2007 ATIP data from several area lakes.

### Tournament Assistance

The BBP was able to assist FLW Outdoors with fish care and delivery for three days at the 2008 BFL All-American that was held on Lake Hamilton in late May.

The AGFC is nearing completion on the new Lake Hamilton Fishing Tournament Weigh-In Center located at the Hulsey Access Area. The center will include aerated tanks, bump sink, stage, scale with digital readout, leader board, and a live-release trailer. It also will have bathrooms as well. The facility should be usable to interested tournament directors sometime in the next couple of months. More on the new facility and how to reserve it in the next quarterly newsletter.