



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.

Jan – Mar 2006

The Winter of 2006 has been a busy one for the Black Bass Program (BBP). We have attended meetings and/or given presentations to the Arkansas Bass Association (ABA), Arkansas B.A.S.S. Federation (ABF), a citizen advisory committee at Millwood, Sherwood Bass Club, and the Arkansas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society. Colton also attended and was a presenter at the Southern Division American Fisheries Society meeting in San Antonio and also at the largemouth bass stocking symposium in Osage Beach, Missouri. We were able to assist Districts 10 and 4 with some habitat improvement work on Lakes Conway and Pickthorne. Our annual sampling trip to Monticello treated us to another awesome night of electrofishing and we also were able to assist District 6 with some Lake Columbia largemouth bass sampling and analysis. We tagged approximately 3,700 yearling feed-trained Florida bass that were stocked into Lake Greenlee. We also were able to assist with the ABA's Governor's Cup

at Dardanelle and also worked tournaments with the new live-release boat at Lake Ouachita. Several bass tournament clubs in South Arkansas were very helpful in assisting the Fisheries Division with the collection of largemouth bass broodstock for the Cummins nursery pond. Black Bass Program Biologists also assisted District 8 and the Hulsey Hatchery crew with the collection of walleye broodstock for the annual walleye spawning project.

Fish Sampling

The BBP assisted District 5 Biologists Diana Andrews and Jeremy Risley with some spring electrofishing at Lake Monticello in mid-March where the size of the fish was again quite impressive to say the least. It was an excellent night with the fish in the prespawn phase and moving into 4-6 feet of water.



Kevin holding an 8# and an 11#unker from Lake Monticello!



Kevin collecting tissue samples from Lake Columbia largemouth bass

Spring electrofishing consists of using a boat mounted generator and variable voltage pulsator that produces a mild current and electrical field around the boat. This electrical field immobilizes or temporarily disables the fish while motoring over or near them along the shoreline. Once immobilized or “stunned”, bass are netted and placed into an aerated holding tank where they are then measured, weighed, and released unharmed back into the lake. This sampling technique is used to evaluate the size structure of the largemouth bass population.

The BBP was able to assist District 6 Biologists Don Turman and Jason Olive with the analysis of some Lake Columbia largemouth bass. Tissue samples were taken for genetics, largemouth bass virus (LMBV), and age and growth analyses from largemouth bass collected during standard electrofishing surveys in March.

The BBP also tagged approximately 3,700 yearling feed-trained Florida largemouth bass for stocking into Marion McCollum Lake Greenlee near Brinkley.



Feed-trained FLMB tagged with a bright pink elastomer tag and stocked into Lake Greenlee

The bass averaged six inches and were tagged with a bright pink elastomer tag, a type of liquid plastic that is injected with a syringe near the fish’s dorsal fin. These tags will enable biologists to monitor the feed-trained fish for several years in an effort to determine what kind of contribution they are making to the bass population.

Meetings and Presentations

The BBP attended meetings with the ABA and ABF and also gave a presentation to the ABF board. These two organizations partnered together along with the AGFC to produce ten thousand Bass I.D./ Keep Fish Alive cards.



Bass i.d./Keep them alive card with lanyard anglers can keep in their boat for reference

This was a cost share project with the ABA and the ABF providing the twenty-five percent matching funds totaling \$1,845.00. What a great bass conservation project for these organizations to collaborate on! The cards are available to the bass angling public upon request and at Lake Dardanelle State Park. Cards will be made available at the new weigh-in buildings being built at Greers Ferry and Lake Hamilton, at ABA and ABF sponsored bass tournament events, and at the Ford Big Bass Bonanza.

Colton was able to attend the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society meeting in San Antonio where he gave an update on LMBV in Arkansas. He also gave an overview of the AGFC's black bass propagation and stocking methods at a

bass-stocking symposium in Osage Beach, Missouri. Colton also gave a presentation to the Sherwood Bass Club on the BBP's statewide activities and ongoing projects.

The BBP was invited to a meeting with a citizen advisory committee at Lake Millwood sponsored by the local Corps of Engineer Office at Millwood and District 8 Fishery Biologists Drew Wilson and Les Claybrook. The advisory committee is being formed to address several issues at Millwood including the expanding nuisance aquatic vegetation and siltation problems.

Kevin attended an aquatic plant workshop at the Arkansas Chapter meeting of the American Fisheries Society at Lake DeGray in February.

Habitat Improvement Projects

The BBP assisted District 10 Biologist Carl Perrin and lake manager, Dustin Opine with the transportation of numerous Christmas trees to Lake Conway. The BBP also assisted District 4 Biologists Jeff Farwick and Lee Holt with hauling several trees to Tommy Sproles Lake Pickthorne for the anglers to put out for fish habitat.

Tournament Assistance

The BBP was able to assist two tournaments on Ouachita, Vince Miller's Super Team and the Wal-Mart BFL. The live-release boat was used at both tournaments and the fish were spread out successfully over a larger area and away from the tournament access sites. The Stratos Owner's Group tournament was

held at Ouachita and FLW Outdoors personnel operated the live-release boat at this tournament.

Kevin provided a truck at the Arkansas B.A.S.S. Federation Championship at Felsenthal NWR on March 31 and April 1 for fish handling and distribution.

The ABA and the Fisheries Division received a big help from three bass clubs this year that graciously provided the fish from their weigh-ins as broodstock for the Cummins nursery ponds. Berry Beavers, Lonoke Hatchery Manager, was also very instrumental in this process by providing fish hauling trucks at these weigh-ins and transporting the fish to the Cummins ponds.

The two nursery ponds totaling 11 acres are typically harvested in late September or early October with a portion of the fish going to pools upstream and the remaining fish released through a drainpipe directly into pool 2 of the Arkansas River. This year, we plan to harvest the fish prior to the Arkansas Ford Dealers Big Bass Bonanza in late June and let anglers help distribute the fingerlings by boat during the tournament.

The clubs that provided brood fish were the LA Bass Club, Monticello Bass Club, and Team Supreme. These tournament directors and their anglers all deserve a big thank you for their support and effort on this very worthwhile bass conservation project on the Arkansas River.

The Fisheries Division said goodbye in February to Jon Stein, Fish

Pathologist at the Hulsey Hatchery. Jon took a position with Kansas Department of Wildlife and Fisheries near Wichita as a District Fisheries Biologist. Although he loved working for the AGFC, he and his wife wanted to move closer to their families in Kansas and Colorado. Jon shared a small office with the BBP at the Hot Springs Regional Office and his companionship, professionalism, and dedication will be sorely missed. We hope to have his position filled by late spring/early summer. On a good note, the BBP would like to welcome Tobin Fulmer to the program as a part-time fisheries technician. Tobin is a Henderson State University graduate and will gain valuable experience in the next few months as the BBP gears up for a busy spring.

Congratulations to Kevin Hopkins on his marriage to Melissa Hall. The couple exchanged vows in Las Vegas March 4.

