



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.

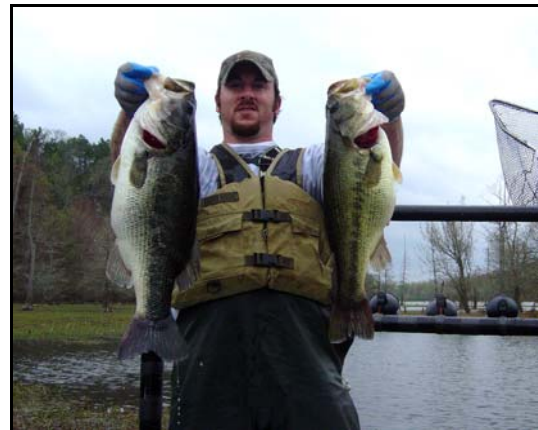
Jan-Mar 07

The Winter of 2007 has been a busy one for the Black Bass Program (BBP). We recently completed our electrofishing boat and were able to put it to good use conducting our standard springtime electrofishing at Lakes Millwood, Monticello, and Ouachita. Kevin assisted Districts 7 and 8 with some Smallmouth bass broodstock collection from the Caddo River. Several tournaments were assisted by the BBP this Winter at Lake Ouachita and Hamilton. Three tournaments held at Pendleton Bridge near Dumas were used for broodstock collection for the Cummins nursery pond. We also attended several fisheries meetings, continuing educational conferences and workshops.

Fish Sampling

The BBP assisted District 7 Biologists Drew Wilson and Les Claybrook with some spring electrofishing at Lake Millwood in mid-March. We also assisted our Fish Pathologist, Kelly Winningham, with the collection of fish for a fish health assessment, LMB Virus, and Florida

largemouth bass genetics evaluation. We were able to electrofish on three different days at six different areas of the lake to get a good representative sample of the bass fishery. The fish looked to be in good condition going into the spawn.



Kevin with a couple of nice Millwood bass!

We also assisted District 5 Biologists Diana Andrews and Jeremy Risley with electrofishing on Lake Monticello again this year. As we have come to expect at Monticello, we saw numerous fish over five pounds and several in the 8-9 lb class. We also

collected some fin clips for genetics work to be done on these fish as well. Modern DNA technology allows us to only take fin clips from fish in order to determine if they exhibit any Florida bass genetics. This way if we do not need any other samples from the fish we can measure and weigh the fish, take a fin clip and release it. Below is a picture of a couple of the bass we saw at Monticello.



A pair of nice Monticello bass!

The BBP and Fish Pathologist, Kelly Winningham, also assisted District 8 Biologists Stuart Wooldridge and Brett Hobbs with their springtime electrofishing at Lake Ouachita. Thus far, we have sampled fish at Rabbittail, Hwy 27, and Buckville. Along with our standard length and number data, we are also taking fin clips from the fish at Rabbittail and Buckville in order to gain some baseline genetics data. This year is the first year of a project that involves stocking Florida-strain largemouth bass into the Rabbittail/Buckville area. In order to monitor any shift in genetic frequencies we must first gain this baseline data to detect any kind of change in the future in which we could attribute to our stockings. Below is a picture of us collecting fin clips from Lake Ouachita.



Kelly taking a fin clip from a Ouachita bass!

Kevin also assisted District 7 and 8 with collection of broodstock Smallmouth bass for the Andrew Hulsey Hatchery. These fish will be used to produce fingerlings for the Caddo, Little Missouri, and Saline Rivers. The brood will be returned to their original locations after harvest of the ponds are complete.

Tournament Assistance

The BBP was able to assist two tournaments this Winter and also let one tournament group use the live release barge at Lake Ouachita. The Arkie Division of the BFL (FLW Outdoors) used the release barge at Mountain harbor in February for their first event of the year. Kevin assisted the TBF Championship at Hamilton and the American Cancer Society at Ouachita with fish care and distribution.

The White River Bassmasters, Dumas Bass Club, and the Monticello Bass Club assisted the AGFC with collection of broodstock for the Cummins nursery ponds from their tournaments that were held at Pendleton Bridge near Dumas. Berry Beavers, Lonoke Hatchery Manager, was very instrumental in this process by providing the fish hauling truck at these weigh-ins and transporting the fish to the Cummins ponds. The nursery

ponds are typically harvested in late September or early October with a portion of the fish going to pools upstream and the remaining fish are released through a drainpipe directly into pool 2. This year, we plan to harvest the fish prior to the Arkansas Ford Dealers Big Bass Bonanza and let anglers distribute the fingerlings during the tournament at the five weigh-in locations as we did last year. These tournament directors and their anglers all deserve a BIG thank you for their efforts on this worthwhile project.

Meetings and Presentations

Colton attended meetings with the ABA, ABF, and the TBF. We both attended the last meeting of the Lake Ouachita Citizen Advisory Group (LOCAG) that was held at Lake Hamilton High School. The meeting went well with the advisory group members generally liking our final draft with a few sticking points and minor edits that will be made before we publish the final draft of the Lake Ouachita Management Plan. Kevin attended the Arkansas Chapter of the American Fisheries Society meeting in Mt. View. We both were able to attend the Southern Division of the American Fisheries Society meeting held in Memphis. Kevin also attended a Franklin Covey Workshop at Ferndale.

The BBP attended a training workshop at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) on Stream Sampling. The AGFC is going to be doing several more stream and small rivers samples in the future. This will allow us to possibly see any water quality problems in streams or small rivers before they reach any of our reservoirs.