

# White bass — the carnival fish

P. T. Barnum would have loved Texas' white bass run.

It's the zaniest time of year for the state's sportfishermen, when millions of white bass feel the spawning urge and head upstream in virtually every major river system.

Fishermen of all sizes and descriptions converge on the white bass "hotspots" — sometimes elbow to elbow — and fling all manner of hardware and live bait in hopes of catching a stringer of the silvery fish.

The annual run starts as early as March, depending on rainfall and other weather conditions. It can last through April, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists say.

With runoff from recent rains swelling streams across the state, the spring white bass run appears to be in full swing right now.

"I would advise anyone who wants to get in on the action to plan to fish in the next couple of weeks," said Bob Bounds, inland fisheries management coordinator.

Biologists and the state's outdoor writers generally concur that the past cold winter combined with heavy spring rains may have delayed the main spawning run by a few weeks.

"Last year we had a dry spring and the white bass run was pretty much over by this time, but this year the best fishing should be just around the corner," said Bounds.

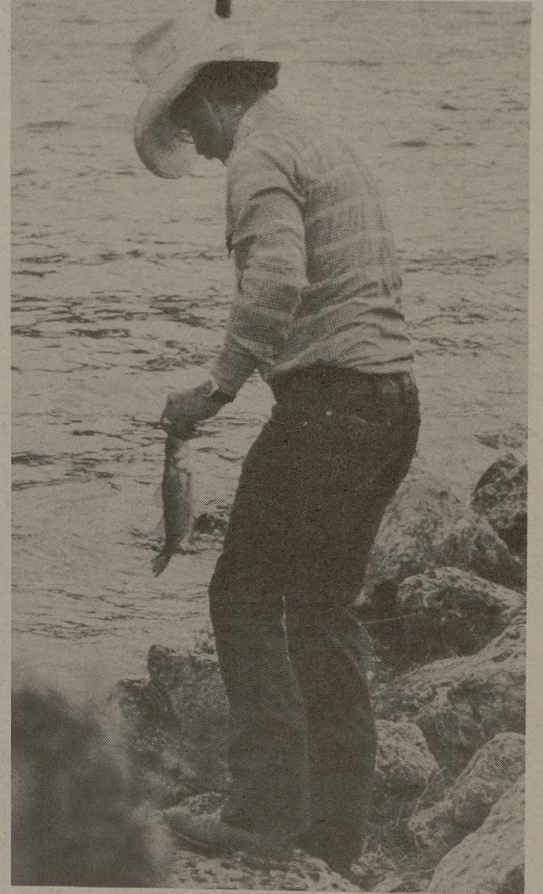
The white bass run represents one of the department's most successful efforts for the sportfishermen. Prior to 1932, the fish were found only in Caddo Lake and in river systems in the northeast corner of the state.

The department — at that time the Game, Fish and Oyster Commission — transplanted 13 white bass from Caddo Lake to old Lake Dallas in 1932.

From that humble beginning, white bass populations exploded and from recreational and economic view points the fish now rivals the much-sought-after black



**Fisherman line almost elbow-to-elbow below Lake Somerville's spillway to catching white bass during the spring spawning run. At right, a fisherman reaches for the stringer with small but toothsome white bass.**  
Photos by Lee Roy Leschper Jr.



## Tips for spillway whites

Spillway white bass are as fickle as spring weather. Some days the whites will hit any bait cast to them — other days they stubbornly refuse all the angler's offerings.

The well-equipped fisherman thus has a better chance of having what the fish want that particular day. A tackle box full of jigs, spinners and spoons in yellow, white, gold and silver colors will serve

well. With a few noisy top-water plugs and a bucket of lively minnows, the angler can cover almost any condition.

By starting on the edge of swirling water below the dam spillway and trying different depths and retrieves, the fisherman should soon pinpoint the whites.

P. S. Take plenty of extra baits. Spillway waters are generally filled with snaggy rocks ideal for losing tackle.

bass in sport fishing importance — particularly during the springtime.

Fisheries biologists point out that whites are caught year-round, but when they concentrate in tailrace areas below dams and in tributaries of lakes they are much easier to locate.

The best spring white bass hotspots are subject to debate, and the fisherman's luck depends on such factors as the weather and time of day or night. But department

biologists say the Trinity River and tributary creeks above Lake Livingston may be the biggest producer, especially for white bass over three pounds.

In the Brazos Valley, the spillway below the Lake Somerville Dam is often a hotspot.

Good areas dot the state and among these are the Colorado River above Lake Buchanan and in tailrace areas downstream below

Lakes Buchanan, Inks, Marble Falls, LBJ and Travis. The Pedernales River above Lake Travis and the Leon River above Lake Belton are favorites. The Brazos River system, which includes Lakes Granbury and Whitney, is excellent for white bass.

Lake Texoma on the Texas-Oklahoma border has been and remains a very good white bass lake, as has Lake Grapevine north

of Dallas. Lakes Ray Hubbard, Cedar Creek, Bridgport and Tawakoni are good white bass producers in North Texas.

## Anglers catch new record bass, striper

Spring has brought a flurry of new state fish records and a number of near-misses for Texas anglers.

Non-native introduced species grabbed the spotlight. The record for striped bass/white bass hybrids was broken twice during March and a new record smallmouth bass entered the books.

Austin's Town Lake yielded a 30-pound striped bass which missed the state record by only 2 and one-half pounds and 16-pound northern pike which missed the state record by only two pounds, two ounces.

Fisheries biologists were particularly pleased with the four-pound, 11-ounce smallmouth caught by Gene Oldham of Wimberley in Canyon Lake April 6.

One of the shortest-lived records was established when J. D. Murphy of Mansfield, La., caught an 11-pound, 12-ounce hybrid striped bass from Toleda Bend on March, beating the old record by four and a half ounces.

The ink was hardly dry on Murphy's state record certificate when Curtis Kasner of San Angelo caught a whopping 17 and one-half pounder from Lake Nasworthy, breaking Murphy's record by more than five pounds.



**The Attwater's prairie chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido*), at left, is in danger of extinction. Unique to the Texas coastal prairie and rolling grasslands, an estimated two to three thousand birds are left. The prairie chicken requires open grasslands. But farming and overgrazing by livestock have destroyed most of the native grassland in Texas. Overgrazing has led to brush invasion on the prairies and the bird is intolerant of brush. This photo was taken on the O'Conner Ranch, 18 miles northeast of Refugio.**

Photo by Larry Chandler