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texas parks & wildlife news

TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT • AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744

EDITORS: This is a final reminder that if you have not filled out and returned the card included in the news packet two weeks ago, please do so if you wish to remain on the mailing list. If for some reason you missed getting a card, call toll-free 1-800-252-9327 to assure staying on the list.

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Government Documents

OCT 20 1980

Dallas Public Library
BIG SHARKS HIGHLIGHT
NEW STATE FISH RECORDS

AUSTIN -- Shark fishermen stole the spotlight as a late summer flurry of new state fish records were certified by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

Three tiger sharks, each in excess of 800 pounds, were submitted as potential new state records. All three exceeded the 815-pounder which had held the record since 1975.

Robert L. Derrick of Alta Loma is the new champ, with the 837-pound tiger shark he caught July 4, about 35 miles off Galveston. The new record belonged to Greg Rilal of Texas City for only one day, as he caught an 817-pound tiger shark on July 3, also off Galveston.

Another angler who just missed glory was Susan Kret of San Antonio, whose 832½-pounder was caught three weeks after Derrick's new record fish. Her shark was caught about 15 miles off Port Aransas.

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Derrick's new record shark was 11 feet, seven inches long and was six feet, four inches in girth. He landed it on 80-pound-test line.

Another new shark record was established when Mark A. Johnson of Lamarque caught an 871-pound great hammerhead shark 18 miles off Galveston. The previous record for the species was 870 pounds. Johnson's fish measured 13 feet, 7 3/4 inches in length and five feet, 8 3/4 inches in girth.

Three other new record fish also were certified. Ray Tolson, Jr. of Brownsville landed a 179-pound yellowfin tuna on Aug. 2 off Port Isabel. The former record of 171 pounds was set in 1974.

Niles B. Pritchard of Houston caught the new state record scamp, a 16-pound, 13-ounce fish caught July 13 off Galveston. His scamp beat the former record caught in 1978, by four pounds.

David Clayton Cook of Conroe captured the new record for freshwater German carp in the unrestricted category by landing a 48-pounder with bow and arrow Aug. 14 on Lake Conroe. The fish was 42 inches long and 33 inches in girth.

David E. Smith of Austin had held the record since 1970 with a 41-pound, 12-ounce carp taken from Austin's Town Lake, also with a bow and arrow.

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LAKE FORK BASS PLENTIFUL
BUT SOMEWHAT SMALL

AUSTIN -- Bass fishermen are having good luck in localized spots on Lake Fork, about 90 miles east of Dallas, but many catches have to be put back in the water because they are slightly under the 14-inch length limit.

Good strings of crappie and some catfish also are being taken by fishermen, said Steve Smith, Parks and Wildlife fisheries biologist in Tyler.

The lake, recently opened to the public by the Sabine River Authority, stands at elevation 375 feet or about 7,200 acres, but recent rains have generally bypassed the lake. However, fall and winter rains should bring the lake up to 11,000 acres and fishing should reach a peak next spring. When full, the lake should have more than 27,000 surface acres.

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By next spring, the bass spawn of 1979 should exceed the 14-inch minimum. The bass limit is five per day and 10 in possession.

One of the biggest problems on the lake right now, Smith says, is limited access. Since the lake is low, fishermen are not able to use the temporary boat ramps. This problem should be eased somewhat when the water rises. Shallow water in the lake makes it difficult for fishermen to get to all parts of the lake by boat. When the water rises, fishermen should be able to get to the upper reaches of the lake.

Along with rods, reels, lures and boat, Smith advises that all fishermen attach a yardstick or other measuring device to the boat's gunwales to measure catches. Many of the fish now caught, Smith says, are about a half-inch short of the 14-inch minimum and must be returned to the water immediately.

PH 10/1/80

PEACOCK BASS STOCKED
IN COLETO CREEK LAKE

AUSTIN -- Texas Parks and Wildlife Department biologists have stocked 4,110 fingerling South American peacock bass in Coleto Creek Reservoir near Victoria.

Also stocked were 50 one-year-old surplus brood fish which also were produced at the department's Heart O' the Hills research station at Ingram.

Inland Fisheries Research Coordinator Nick Carter said the new powerplant reservoir has not yet opened for fishing.

The peacocks, which require extremely warm water for survival, are expected to survive through the winter months because of the power plant hot water discharge at the lake.

Previous stockings of the hard-fighting game fish in Lake Bastrop near Bastrop failed because of winter plant shutdowns which allowed the water temperature to drop below the 62-degree level which is fatal to peacocks.

Carter said Alcoa Lake is a promising release site for the bass, and the lake management committee of Alcoa Aluminum Corp. at Rockdale is considering it for their lake, but so far no decision has been announced.

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PEACOCK BASS, cont'd.

'SLOT LIMIT', cont'd.

Peacock bass have spawned several times in ponds at the Ingram facility, and Carter said they will spawn in powerplant lakes if they survive winter temperatures.

Peacock bass are hailed as one of the world's finest game fish. In their native habitat in South America they easily surpass 20 pounds and are known for their acrobatics when hooked, Carter said.

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'SLOT LIMIT' SHOULD
HELP CALAVERAS FISHING

AUSTIN -- The new "slot limit" on largemouth bass slated to go into effect Nov. 1 at Lake Calaveras near San Antonio is aimed at restoring a depleted resource.

The limit will make it illegal for fisherman to retain bass between 14 and 18 inches in length. All other sizes may be kept.

Biologist Jimmy Dean believes longtime Calaveras bass fishermen will agree that during the mid-1970s the lake produced a remarkable number of fish in the 14-18 inch class. This no longer is so.

"The lake still produces a large number of small bass, plus an occasional very large fish, but very little in between," Dean said.

This condition has been documented by more than casual observation. Studies using both the chemical rotenone and electroshocking devices since 1975 have consistently revealed a pattern of decline in the 14-18 inch bass.

For instance, cove rotenone data collected in 1975 showed an estimated 66.03 pounds of bass per acre in Lake Calaveras, with 82 of the collected fish in the 14-18 inch class. By comparison, cove rotenone data collected four years later showed 26.5 pounds of bass per acre, with only 11 fish in the 14-18 inch class. This translates as a 60 percent decrease by weight and an 86 percent decrease in number of this size class.

Electrofishing samples show a similar decline. In spring 1979, a total of 97 bass were collected. Of these, 66 were in the 13-15 inch group, while 10 were in the 16-21 inch group.

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The same area was sampled in spring 1980. The 99 fish collected included only 22 fish in the 13-15 inch group and 15 in the 16-22 inch group. "This reflects a 66 percent decrease by number for the 13-15 inch groups with an increase in the larger inch groups," Dean said.

Heavy fishing pressure is to blame for the decline of this prime size predator, Dean believes. "Since anglers began catching eight-pound-plus bass there about three years ago, fishing pressure has increased tremendously," said Dean.

Dean points out that there are three primary reasons for establishing the slot limit: to protect the size bass which are the more efficient predators, thereby helping to control populations of rough fish such as tilapia; to provide protection for the more efficient spawners; and to provide a source of future trophy-size bass.

He urges fishermen to use care in handling the bass to be released. "Before pulling the fish out of the water, grasp and lift it by the lower jaw, forcing the mouth open. Remove the hook or hooks carefully without touching the fish's body if possible, then return it gently to the water," Dean explained.

Grasping the fish's body can damage internal organs, and touching the scales open the door to fungus infections, he said.

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STATE PARK CABINS
ARE A FALL BARGAIN

AUSTIN -- For fall vacationers there's a real bargain available in state park cabins, says the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Texas' pleasant fall weather and variety of scenery can be enjoyed both comfortably and economically.

In six parks this takes the form of individual cabin units containing sleeping accommodations, bath and kitchen. Linens and towels are provided, but not utensils. Rates are \$12 per night for one or two persons, with \$3 for each additional adult, \$1 for each additional child 6-12 years old and children under six free in the same cabin as their guardians.

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STATE PARK CABINS, cont'd.

Parks with these units include Bastrop State Park in Bastrop County, Lake Brownwood State Recreation Area in Brown County and Caddo Lake State Park in Harrison County; which have especially rustic, log-type cabins; Daingerfield State Park, Morris County; Garner State Park, Uvalde County; and Possum Kingdom State Recreation Area, Palo Pinto County.

Two parks offer additional services. San Solomon Springs Courts at Balmorhea State Recreation Area, Reeves County, has 10 Spanish-style motel units with kitchens, eight without. Fees, which include towels, linens and television, are \$13 for one person; each additional adult \$3, child ages 6-12 \$1, under six free; extra cost for kitchen \$4. This park is known as the "Oasis of West Texas," with its large, spring-fed swimming pool, lawns and trees providing a refreshing contrast to the surrounding desert plains.

Indian Lodge at Davis Mountains State Park in Jeff Davis County furnishes comfortable inn accommodations among magnificent mountain scenery. Rates are: single \$16; double \$18; double with twin beds \$21; suite \$23; each additional adult \$3, child 6-13 \$1, under six free with parents. Towels, linens, maid service and television are included, and there is an excellent dining room and heated swimming pool.

Reservations are advisable and may be made within 90 days of the anticipated arrival date. For further information phone 1-800-252-9327, toll-free.

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