

# New Strawn District Fishing News

Spring 2017

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## New Habitat for Woodson State Lake and Yates Center South Owl



We sank a total of 62 habitat cubes at Woodson State Fishing Lake this past fall and winter. We sank the cubes in clusters of at least three and placed them in various spots around the lake. Woodson has fairly good shoreline habitat in the form of brush and water willow, but when the lake drops a few feet the available habitat decreases substantially. So we are trying to increase the habitat diversity by sinking these cubes in deeper water and giving fish a place for refuge. Nineteen cubes were sunk at Yates Center South Owl. This 150-acre community lake on the outskirts of Yates Center is a shallow, productive body of water that also lacks habitat diversity. This lake holds a pretty constant water level throughout the year, but the available habitat is not that good. There is no standing timber or brush piles in the lake, and the only good habitat is the aquatic vegetation around the lake perimeter and the submerged rock and concrete jetty in the middle of the lake. I think both lakes are going to benefit greatly with these habitat cubes, and hopefully anglers will also see the benefits through increased catch rates. Maps and the associated GPS coordinates are below, and don't forget you can get on our website and access the GPS coordinates for fish attractors in any lake in the state. Keep in mind these files get updated periodically, so be sure you stay up to date with them. Click [HERE](#) for the link to the Google Earth File containing the artificial habitat coordinates or click [HERE](#) for the link to the Google Earth File containing the coordinates for all brushpiles.

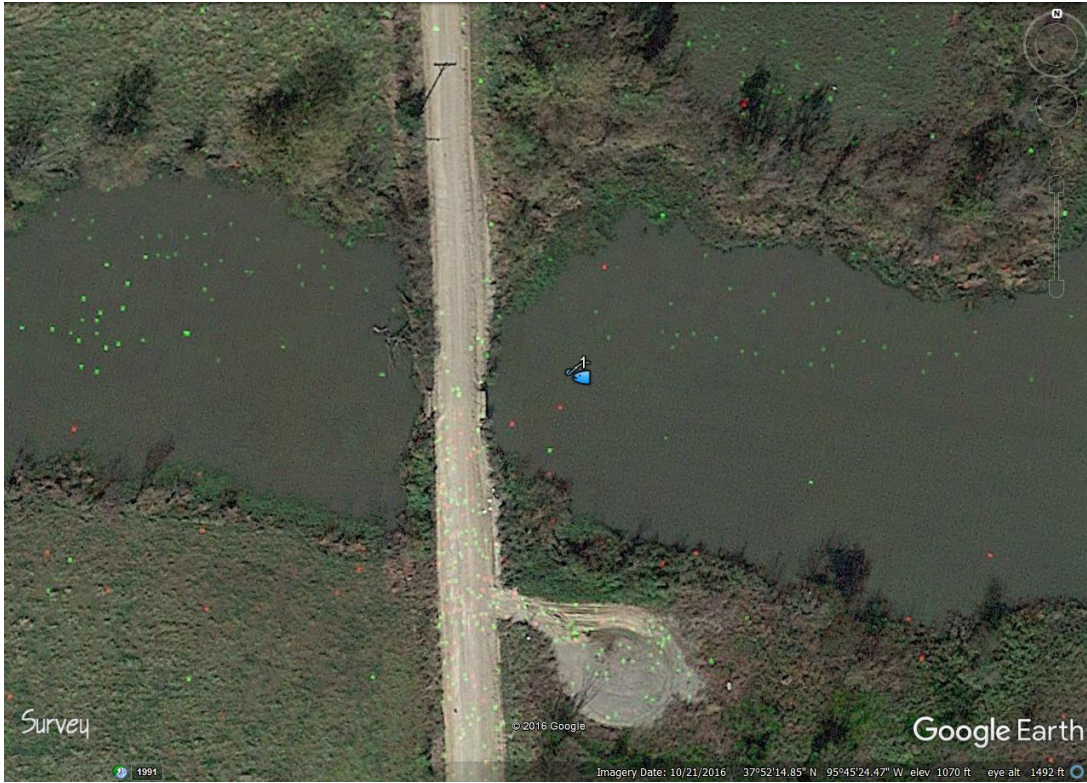
# Woodson State Lake



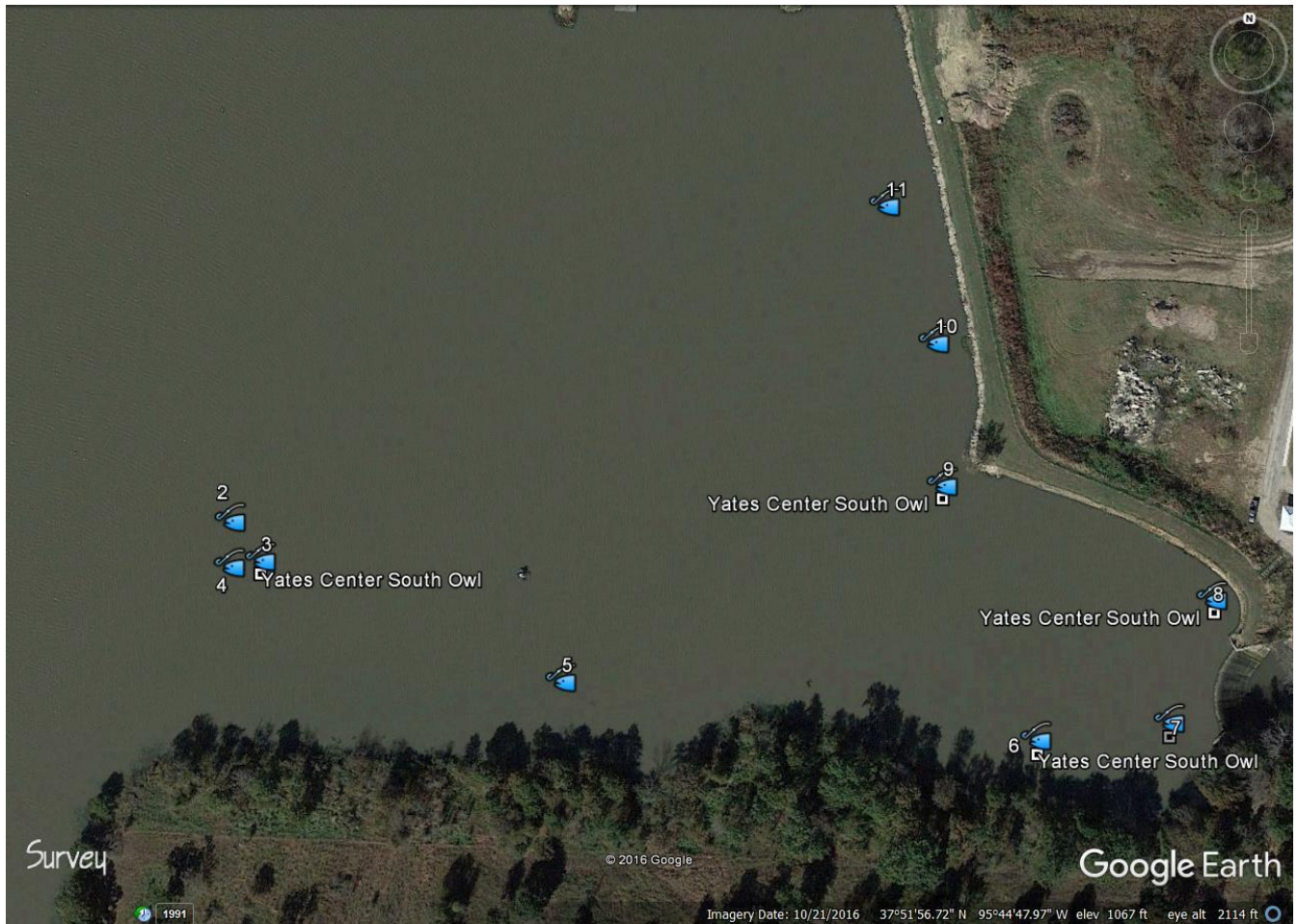
## Woodson State Fishing Lake Habitat Cube Locations

37°47.763'N 95°50.808'W	37°47.686'N 95°50.663'W	37°47.297'N 95°50.462'W
37°47.822'N 95°50.783'W	37°47.690'N 95°50.660'W	37°47.953'N 95°50.752'W
37°47.854'N 95°50.772'W	37°47.545'N 95°50.579'W	37°48.022'N 95°50.740'W
37°47.681'N 95°50.669'W	37°47.262'N 95°50.658'W	37°47'37.27"N 95°50'29.19"W

# Yates Center South Owl



West Side of South Owl by the Bridge.



Main body of South Owl.

## Coordinates for South Owl Habitat Cubes

#1	#4	#7	#10
37°52'14.88" N	37°51'55.62" N	37°51'54.30" N	37°51'57.78" N
95°44'44.52" W	95°44'52.86" W	95°44'41.82" W	95°44'44.64" W
#2	#5	#8	#11
37°51'56.04" N	37°51'54.60" N	37°51'55.44" N	37°51'59.04" N
95°44'52.86" W	95°44'48.96" W	95°44'41.34" W	95°44'45.24" W
#3	#6	#9	
37°51'55.68" N	37°51'54.12" N	37°51'56.46" N	
95°44'52.50" W	95°44'43.38" W	95°44'44.52" W	

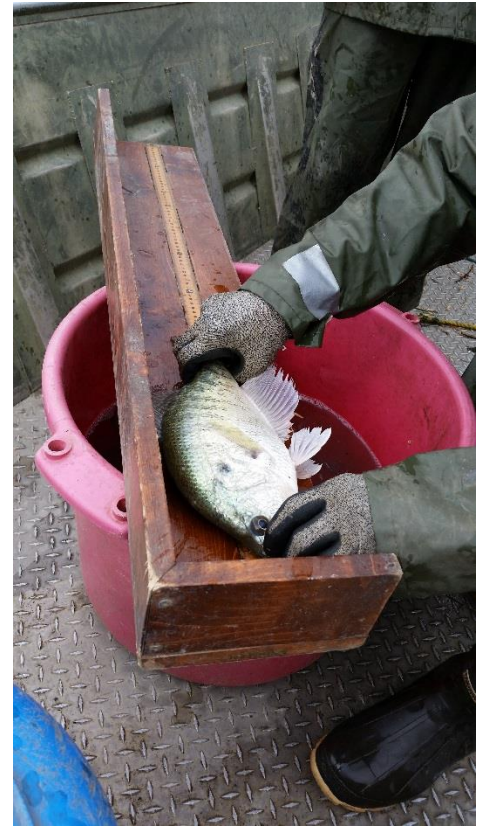


## Saugeye Stocking at Garnett Cedar Valley Reservoir

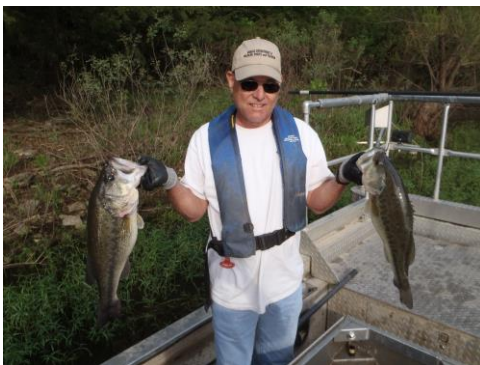
In an effort to improve the crappie fishery at Garnett Cedar Valley Reservoir (Cedar Creek Lake), I stocked 10,000 saugeye fingerlings last year, and the fish pictured on the left is one I shocked in early September. The saugeye is a cross between a sauger and a walleye, and they typically do better than walleye in smaller lakes with high flow-through. Saugeye should do well in this impoundment with the amount of forage available in the form of shad and small crappie. If we can get a good population of saugeye established, coupled with a population of wipers that I have also been stocking, I believe we can turn the crappie population around and provide better fishing opportunities for bigger fish. We may even produce some good opportunities to catch big saugeye and wipers. I have requested to stock more saugeye this year, but the stocking will be dependent on fish availability from the hatcheries.

# What to Expect in 2017

**Crappie** – We saw fewer numbers of 10- to 12-inch fish in John Redmond last fall, but there still seems to be decent numbers of fish over 12 inches, and the lake should still provide some good opportunities this spring. The dredge did create some nice drop-offs which fish should hold on post spawn. Smaller lakes such as Lebo City Lake and Garnett South Lake showed improving crappie populations with an increased number of larger fish in their respective populations. These two lakes might surprise some anglers this spring. Both Yates Center Lakes should also produce some decent opportunities this year with good numbers of harvestable size fish available.



**Black Bass** – If you are in to bass fishing you can't miss a trip to Coffey County Lake to get in on some awesome smallmouth bass fishing. In recent years we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of smallmouth bass caught and released at this lake. In 2016, of the 56,423 fish caught and released, 32,510 were smallmouth. There are fish over 18 inches



available but the majority anglers catch are in the 13- to 17-inch range. Most lakes in my district have pretty good bass populations, but my top pick for big bass is Garnett Cedar Valley Reservoir. This 350 acre lake currently has an outstanding population of nice big largemouth. Experienced bass anglers should not have any problem catching a five fish limit of over 20 lbs. Other consistent good bass producers include the other Garnett lakes and the Yates Center lakes.



**Catfish (Channel and Blue)** – Anglers should expect pretty good channel catfishing opportunities at most of the lakes in this district. We did not sample many catfish at John Redmond but we did see some fish over 10 pounds. We also saw positive signs for the blue cat population at John Redmond, as many young of the year blue catfish were caught in our gill net sample. If we could just start seeing more of the bigger fish show up in the samples, it would make me feel better about the population. The blue catfish at Coffey County Lake seems to be in pretty stable condition according to our samples and the exit creel data. We recently completed some age and growth analysis on this population using the pectoral spines to age the fish. This population is slow growing and low recruitment seems to be occurring yearly so we are increasing our sampling efforts and are focusing a lot of attention on this fish to get a good grasp of the population.

# Blue Catfish Growth at Coffey County Lake

As I mentioned previously we collected 50 pectoral spines from blue catfish that were weighed in during the Catfish Chasers all night tournament at the end of August last year. Aging a catfish using a spine is like aging a tree. As the fish grows, the spine grows and rings develop inside the spine every year

representing the growth for that year. We use a slow speed wet saw to cut a very thin section off of the bottom of the spine and place it under a microscope. The section is so thin light can be transmitted through it. Pictured on the right is a screen shot I took of a spine cross section and you can clearly see the growth rings. This fish was aged at 10 years old, but was only around 25" long.



The largest fish we aged was just shy of 39" and we estimated the age to be around 17 years old. We did estimate one fish to be 22 years old and it was only 31" long! It's important to keep in mind these are just estimates and this method of aging can be highly subjective and vary greatly from one reader to the next. However, we can definitely say the blue cats at Coffey County Lake are growing much slower than we anticipated. We are not certain as to why they are growing slower than blues in other lakes, but it is something we are definitely going to spend more time on. I don't think forage is a limiting factor because the fish are in really good shape and typically they would be skinny if forage was lacking. I have no evidence to back up my speculation, but I think the genetics of the population may be playing a role in the slow growth rates. The bottom line is we need to do more research and collect more data to get a better understanding of the population.

**Good Luck in 2017!**