

Big Country Angler's Guide

*Tips and
Opportunities*



Life's better outside.®

THIRD EDITION



Big Country Angler's Guide

Tips and Opportunities

This is the third edition of the *Big Country Angler's Guide: Tips and Opportunities*. This booklet is designed to provide information on reservoirs and fish species found in the Abilene area.

The first edition was published in February 1997. This edition includes changes that have occurred since the second edition was published in 2005. Facility, contact and access information provided in this guide are subject to change. Additional information can be obtained from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office.

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Life's better outside.®



OUR MISSION

Provide the best possible fishing opportunities for present and future anglers while protecting and enhancing freshwater resources.


There are numerous tasks that directly relate to our mission: we collect information to determine size structure, age, growth, abundance, and body condition of fish populations, we check the overall health and abundance of aquatic habitat, and we determine angler effort and success. We analyze this information and develop management plans specific to each reservoir. We make stocking recommendations and stock fish that are raised on state hatcheries located in San Marcos, Electra, Jasper, Athens and in Graford below Possum Kingdom Reservoir. We develop and implement programs to enhance habitat. We introduce kids and parents to fishing through fishing clinics and seminars. We inform and educate the public, both anglers and potential anglers, about our programs, survey results, and available fishing opportunities through articles, newsletters and presentations. We investigate specific management objectives with fisheries research projects. For example, we recently studied saugeye movements in Lake Kirby and determined angler attitudes and opinions on blue catfish fishing and management in the Big Country. We evaluate various length limit regulations as well as statewide sampling procedures. Our programs, surveys, and management of *your* public waters would not be possible without angler support.

Big Country Reservoirs

County/Reservoir [Locator Map Code]	Page
Brown County	4-5
Brownwood [A]	
Fabis/Riverside [B]	
Callahan County	6
Baird [C]	
Clyde [D]	
T&P (Texas & Pacific) [E]	
Coke County	7
Oak Creek [F]	
Coleman County	8-10
Coleman [G]	
Hords Creek [H]	
Old Coleman (Memory) [I]	
San Tana [J]	
Scarborough [K]	
Sealy [L]	
Comanche County	11
Proctor [M]	
Eastland County	12-13
Cisco [N]	
Eastland County [O]	
Leon [P]	
Ringling [Q]	
Haskell County	14
Stamford [R]	

County/Reservoir [Locator Map Code]	Page
Jones County	15-16
Fort Phantom Hill [S]	
North Anson [T]	
Stamford City (College Lake) [U]	
Nolan County	17
Sweetwater [V]	
Trammell [W]	
Runnels County	18-19
New Ballinger [X]	
O.H. Ivie [Y]	
Valley Creek [Z]	
Winters [AA]	
Winters-Elm [AB]	
Shackelford	20
McCarty [AC]	
Stephens County	20-21
Daniels [AD]	
Hubbard Creek [AE]	
Taylor County	22-23
Abilene [AF]	
Buffalo Wallow [AG]	
Cal Young [AH]	
Kirby [AI]	
Nelson Park [AJ]	
Throckmorton County	24
Throckmorton [AK]	

Symbol Legend

 Shore-Fishing Access	 RV Hook-ups	 Bait Store	 Cabins/Motels
 Boat Ramp	 Rest Rooms	 Golf	 Marina
 Picnic	 Fishing Dock	 Playground	 Duck Hunting
 Camping	 Biking	 Swimming	

Brown County

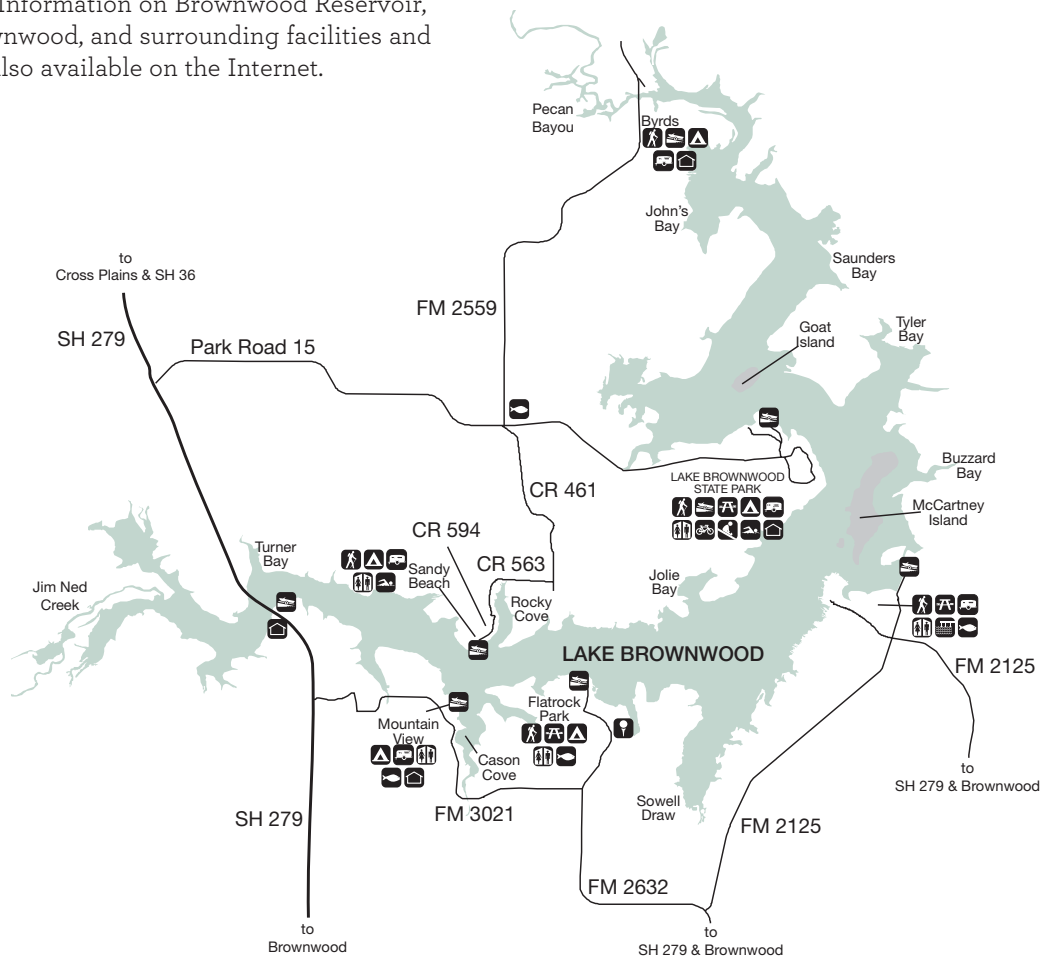
Lake Brownwood [7,300 acres]



Lake Brownwood was impounded in 1933 and is located about 70 miles southeast of Abilene. There are a variety of recreational facilities available, including Lake Brownwood State Park. Brownwood Reservoir has a variety of fishing cover/structure, but rocks and docks are most common. When full, there are also flooded bushes, black willow trees and water willow. Game fish species include largemouth bass, white crappie, white bass, blue catfish, channel catfish and flathead catfish. Largemouth bass and white bass provide the best angling opportunities, but crappie can be good as well. For more information about Brownwood Reservoir and its facilities, contact the Brownwood Chamber of Commerce at (325) 646-9535. The phone number for Lake Brownwood State Park is (325) 784-5223. Information on Brownwood Reservoir, the City of Brownwood, and surrounding facilities and attractions are also available on the Internet.

LAKE BROWNWOOD RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bluegill	0.44	8.00	Jordyn McIntire	05/05/10
Channel catfish	7.80	24.00	Alexis Mounger	02/06/09
Common carp	10.06	27.25	Christopher Dulaney	08/01/07
Flathead catfish	44.00	42.00	Darvel Hutchins	02/22/10
Freshwater drum	2.16	19.00	Steve Perkins	03/09/09
Green sunfish	0.22	7.00	James Watson	07/26/04
Hybrid striped bass	12.43	29.50	Judy Stevens	06/27/06
Largemouth bass	12.65	26.00	Audwin Hall	04/22/90
Longear sunfish	0.14	5.75	James Watson	07/05/07
Longnose gar	8.75	47.00	Dustin Ferguson	08/08/03
Smallmouth buffalo	21.70	30.00	Mark White	06/27/09
White bass	1.64	16.25	Raymond Sewell	02/01/97
White crappie	1.72	15.75	Daniel Fish	10/20/09



Over 300,000 blue catfish were stocked in Lake Brownwood in 2007 and 2010.

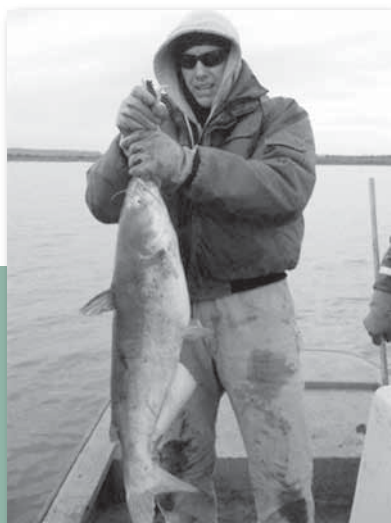
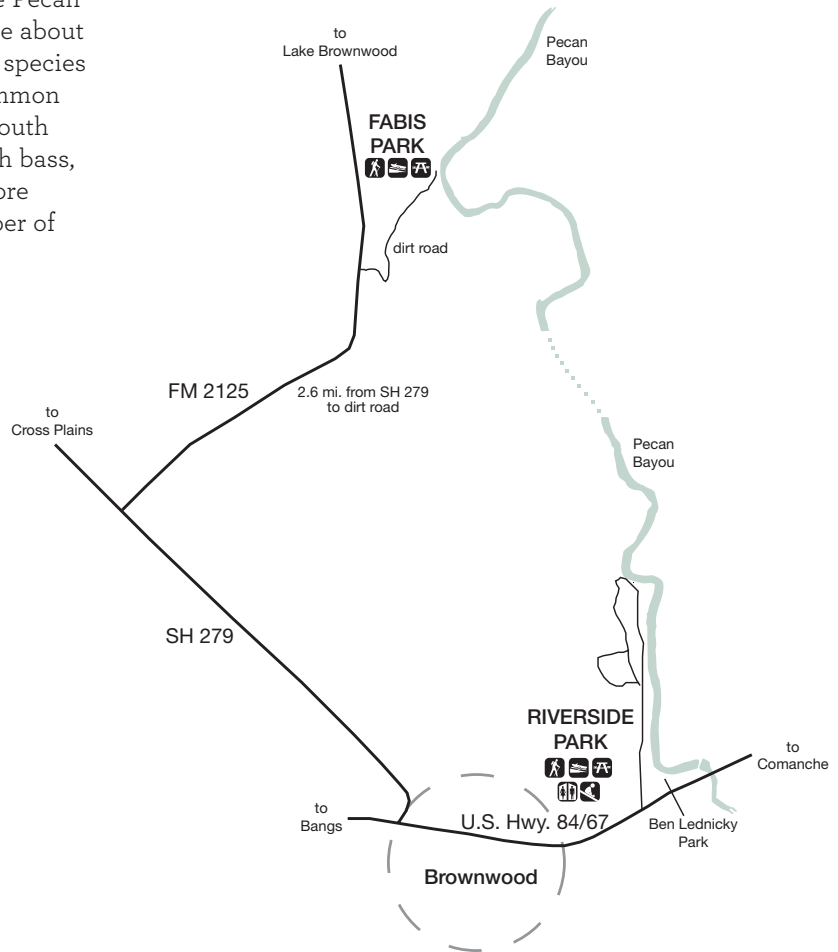
Brown County

Fabis [25 acres]

and Riverside Parks [17 acres]



Fabis and Riverside Parks are located on the Pecan Bayou below Brownwood Reservoir. They are about 70-80 miles southeast of Abilene. Many fish species can be found in the Bayou, but the most common are channel catfish, flathead catfish, smallmouth buffalo and carp. There are some largemouth bass, white bass and white crappie as well. For more information, contact the Brownwood Chamber of Commerce at (325) 646-9535.



The average Big Country lake record catfish:

- Blue catfish:* 37.6 pounds
- Channel catfish:* 7.7 pounds
- Flathead catfish:* 50.3 pounds

Callahan County

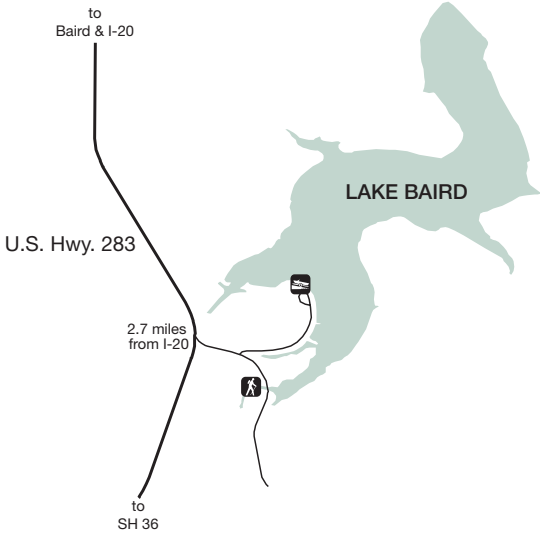
Lake Baird [144 acres]



Lake Baird is located about 25 miles east of Abilene. Historically, Lake Baird had good fishing opportunities for bass, crappie and catfish. Lake Baird is prone to low-water conditions. An access fee may be required. There is an unimproved boat launch. For additional information on Lake Baird, contact Baird City Hall at (325) 854-1212.

LAKE BAIRD RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bluegill	0.26	6.63	Logan Cole	06/02/97
Flathead catfish	61.00	46.00	Jerry Barron	04/22/08
Largemouth bass	10.66	23.50	Donald Valdez	03/07/07
Longear sunfish	0.10	4.75	Robyn Cole	06/02/97
Redear sunfish	0.26	7.00	Logan Cole	06/02/97
White crappie	2.44	15.00	Mike Teague	01/29/92



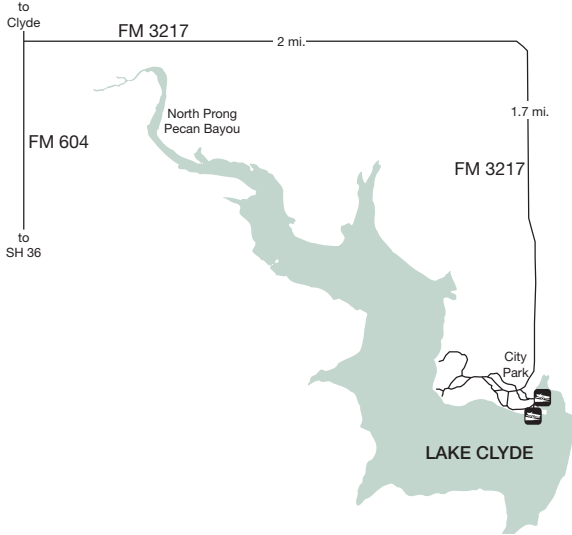
Lake Clyde [374 acres]



Lake Clyde is located about 20 miles east of Abilene. The lake was very low from 2000 through most of 2004. It nearly filled in November 2004 and August 2007. It has two public boat ramps and good picnicking facilities. An access fee is required. Lake Clyde is prone to low-water conditions which can impact fishing success and boating access.

LAKE CLYDE RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Blue catfish	36.92	38.50	Jon Rister	11/20/09
Bluegill	0.18	6.00	James Watson	07/21/07
Channel catfish	7.70	26.50	Christopher Ohern	06/21/03
Common carp	3.00	19.25	Bob Morrison	05/30/01
Flathead catfish	46.00	43.00	Keith Peterson	06/04/03
Green sunfish	0.32	7.50	James Watson	07/21/07
Largemouth bass	14.80	27.00	Brian Monsey	03/11/01
Longear sunfish	0.08	4.75	James Watson	07/21/07
White crappie	2.60	15.75	Lee Buchanan	04/07/92



Lake T&P [44 acres]

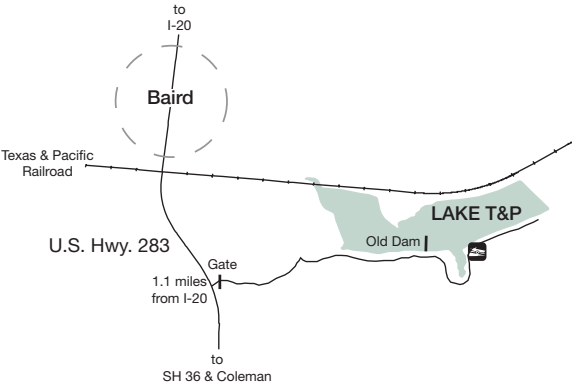
Lake T&P is located about 25 miles east of Abilene. This reser-



voir usually has an excellent crappie population. There is an unimproved boat ramp, best for small boats. The reservoir is also good for float-tube fishing and bank fishing. For more information on Lake T&P, contact the City of Baird at (325) 854-1212.

T&P RECORD

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
White crappie	2.64	15.50	Bob Dean	04/19/99



Coke County

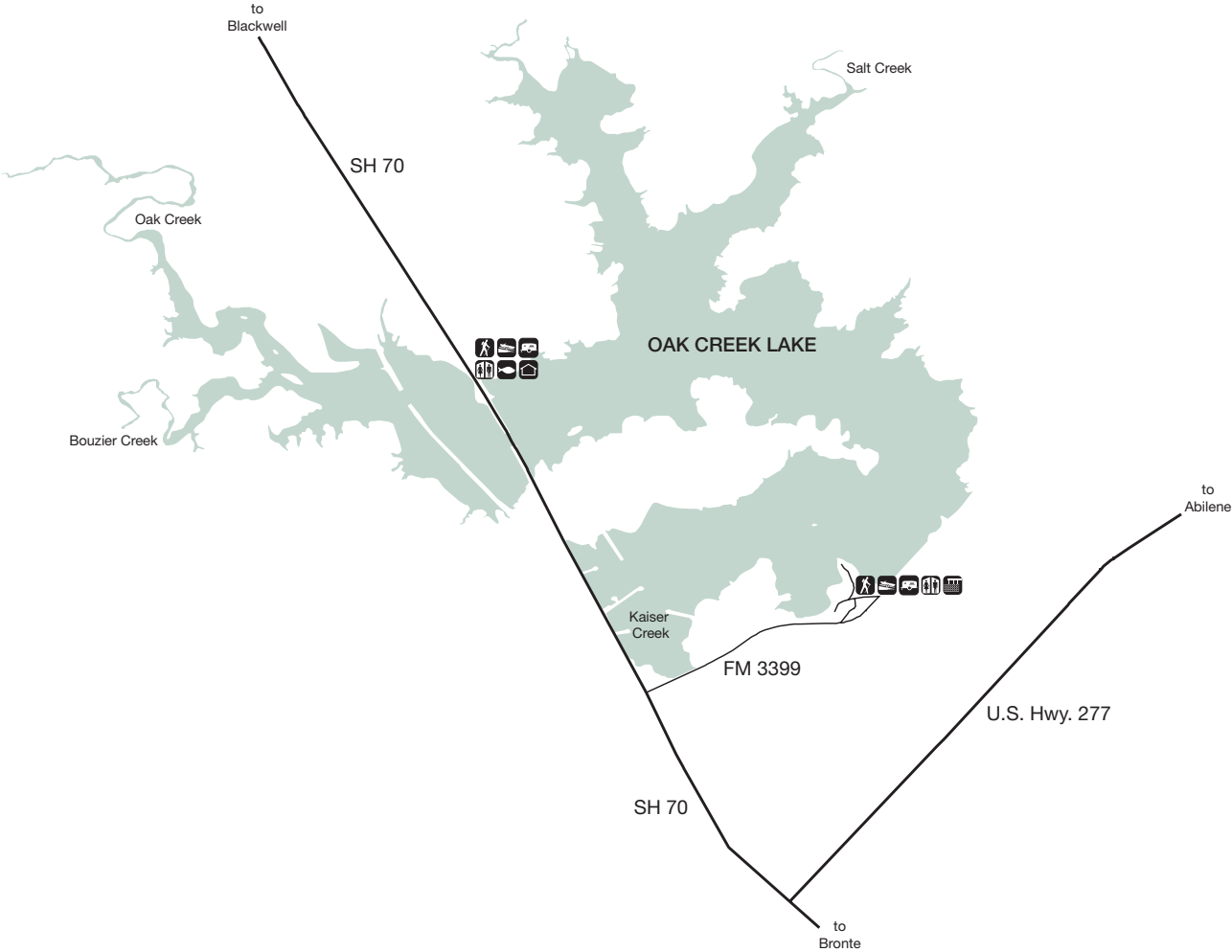
Oak Creek Lake [2,375 acres]



Oak Creek Lake was impounded in 1952 and is located in Coke County approximately 55 miles south of Abilene. Water level dropped significantly at Oak Creek Lake from 1998-2007 before the lake nearly filled in July 2007. Post-drought conditions along with a stocking of fingerling Florida largemouth bass in 2008 have allowed fish populations to quickly expand. As a consequence, fishing opportunities for bass, crappie, and catfish are excellent and should remain so over the next few years. For more information, contact the San Angelo Inland Fisheries District Office at (325) 651-5556 or the City of Sweetwater at (325) 235 4166.

OAK CREEK LAKE RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Blue catfish	31.85	38.00	Ronny Loyd	08/12/10
Bluegill	0.17	6.13	John Hardin	09/02/96
Flathead catfish	44.00	46.00	Don Garner	05/26/06
Green sunfish	0.18	6.25	John Hardin	09/02/96
Largemouth bass	12.88	28.50	Jerry Long	05/17/00
Longear sunfish	0.08	4.00	John Hardin	09/02/96
Redbreast sunfish	0.12	5.50	John Hardin	09/02/96
Smallmouth bass	4.56	21.50	Lee Niemann	05/29/95
White crappie	1.81	15.50	Bob Long	11/03/94



Coleman County

Lake Coleman [2,000 acres]



Lake Coleman was impounded in 1966 and is located about 45 miles southeast of Abilene. There are good fishing opportunities are present for largemouth bass, white crappie, hybrid striped bass, channel catfish and flathead catfish. There are two public boat ramps. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office or online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/coleman/. Contact Coleman Chamber of Commerce (325) 625-2163 or the lake warden at (325) 382-4636 for more information about Lake Coleman.

LAKE COLEMAN RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bluegill	0.22	6.50	Logan Cole	05/23/97
Common carp	9.90	26.00	Lance Benson	03/15/07
Green sunfish	0.16	6.50	Graham Watson	06/17/07
Hybrid striped bass	12.94	26.00	Jeff Coffey	04/04/06
Largemouth bass	12.92	26.75	Mike Gasaway	03/02/05
Longear sunfish	0.10	5.00	Logan Cole	05/23/97
Longnose gar	16.86	54.00	Clayton Lohse	06/04/03
Smallmouth buffalo	12.67	27.00	Bob Richardson	06/04/03
White crappie	1.44	14.25	Steven Goetz	07/05/04



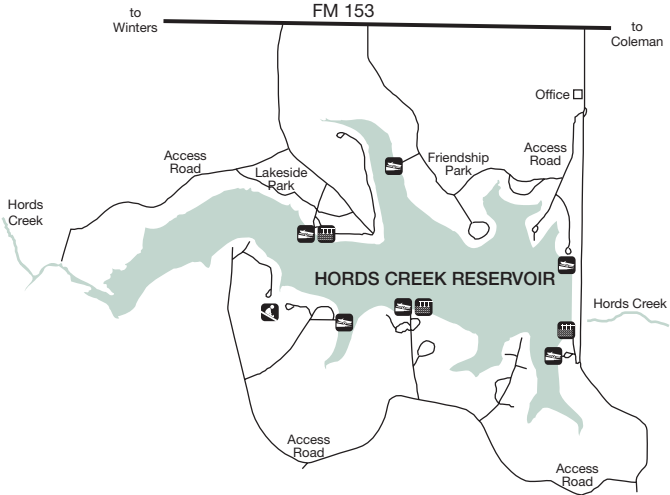
Hords Creek Lake [510 acres]



Hords Creek Lake was impounded in 1948 and is located about 60 miles south of Abilene. After several years of low and dropping water levels, Hords Creek Lake nearly filled in November of 2004. Hords Creek Lake typically has excellent fishing opportunities for largemouth bass and flathead catfish. It also has fair populations of crappie and channel catfish. Camping, picnicking and RV facilities are excellent. Bank-fishing access is excellent. There are several public boat ramps and three fishing piers. An access fee is required. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office or online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/hords_creek/. For more information about Hords Creek Lake, contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at (325) 625-2322 or visit the Fort Worth District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers web site.

HORDS CREEK LAKE RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Black crappie	0.76	11.00	Logan Cole	04/07/01
Bluegill	0.25	6.75	T. Dean Mcinturff	11/03/07
Channel catfish	4.44	23.00	Wayne Watson	06/06/09
Common carp	6.04	23.00	Clayton Lohse	06/17/03
Green sunfish	0.18	6.50	Graham Watson	06/06/09
Largemouth bass	11.41	28.00	Bradley Russell	05/16/98
Redbreast sunfish	0.30	7.75	T. Dean Mcinturff	11/03/07
Redear sunfish	0.25	7.00	T. Dean Mcinturff	11/03/07
River carpsucker	2.90	19.62	Randahl Lohse	06/17/03
White crappie	1.85	14.50	Roy Bamberg	04/17/94



Coleman County

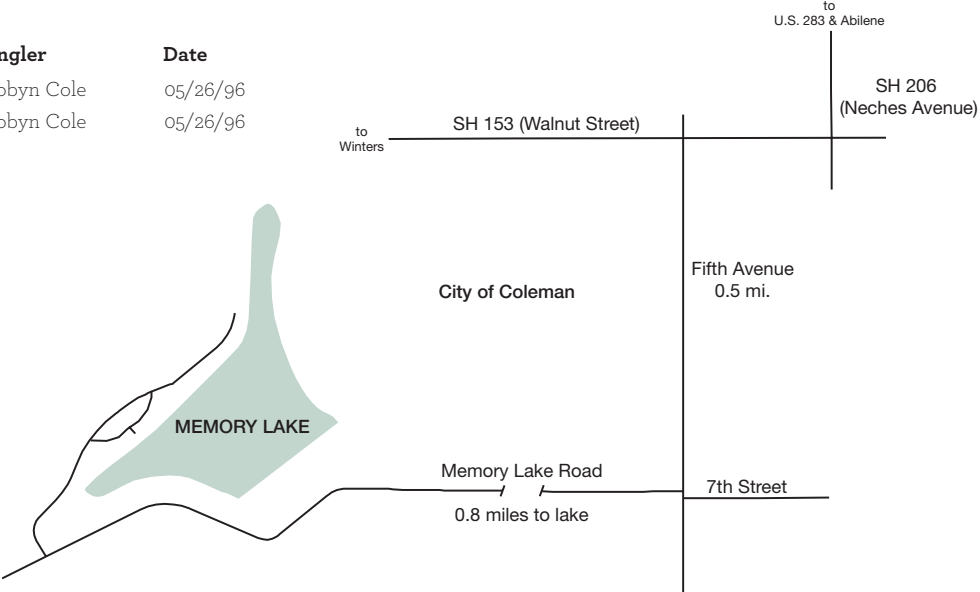
Memory Lake (Old Coleman) [26 acres]



This picturesque lake, located in Coleman, has a constant water level, even during the worst of droughts. Shore-fishing access is very good. It is ideal for teaching children how to fish; there are lots of sunfish and they are easy to catch. For more serious anglers, largemouth bass are abundant. Outboard motor and boat restrictions may be present. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office. For more information on Memory Lake, contact the City of Coleman at (325) 625-4116.

MEMORY LAKE RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bluegill	0.42	7.63	Robyn Cole	05/26/96
Redear sunfish	0.33	8.13	Robyn Cole	05/26/96



Lakes Sealy [40 acres] and San Tana [50 acres]



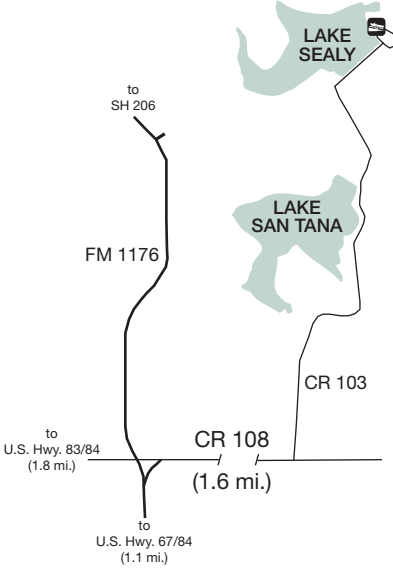
These reservoirs are excellent for float tubes and wade fishing. Lake Sealy typically has the better bass population. Sunfish are abundant in both reservoirs. Aquatic vegetation, mostly water milfoil, is common in both reservoirs. For more information, contact Santa Anna City Hall at (325) 348-3403.

LAKE SEALY RECORD

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bluegill	0.40	8.00	Georgeanne Cole	06/15/96

LAKE SAN TANA RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bluegill	0.43	8.00	Robyn Cole	05/26/97
Largemouth bass	8.94	24.00	Orvel Pape	02/20/00



Coleman County

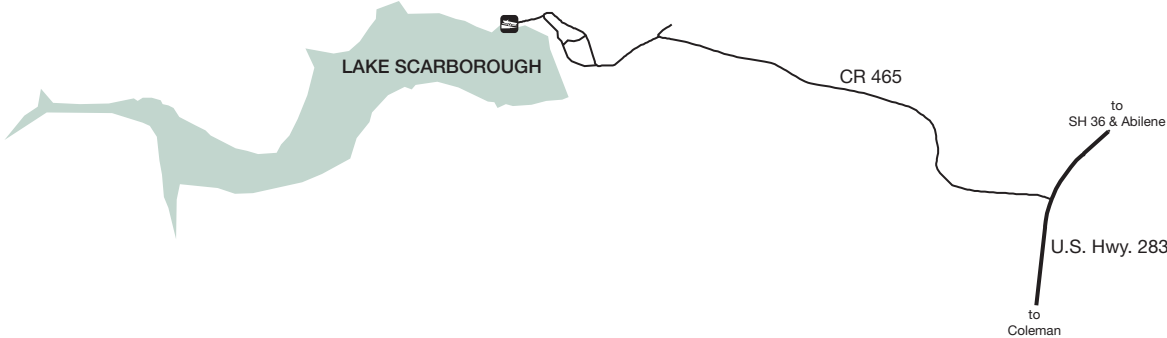
Lake Scarborough [116 acres]



This reservoir, impounded in 1923, is canyon-like with a rocky shoreline. This reservoir has healthy amounts of aquatic vegetation in the form of water willow and floating-leaf pondweed. Largemouth bass fishing is consistently good, but crappie fishing can be good as well. Fishing for sunfish and channel catfish is underrated. There is no improved or concrete boat ramp, but a boat-launching area is present with limited parking. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office. For more information, contact the City of Coleman at (325) 625-4116.

LAKE SCARBOROUGH RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bluegill	0.22	6.50	James Watson	06/17/06
Common carp	4.56	21.50	Wayne Watson	06/17/06
Green sunfish	0.25	7.37	Logan Cole	06/28/03
Longear sunfish	0.06	4.50	Logan Cole	06/28/03
Redear sunfish	0.22	6.75	Logan Cole	06/28/03



Lake Scarborough is one of the few reservoirs in the state with all northern-strain largemouth bass.

Comanche County

Lake Proctor [4,610 acres]

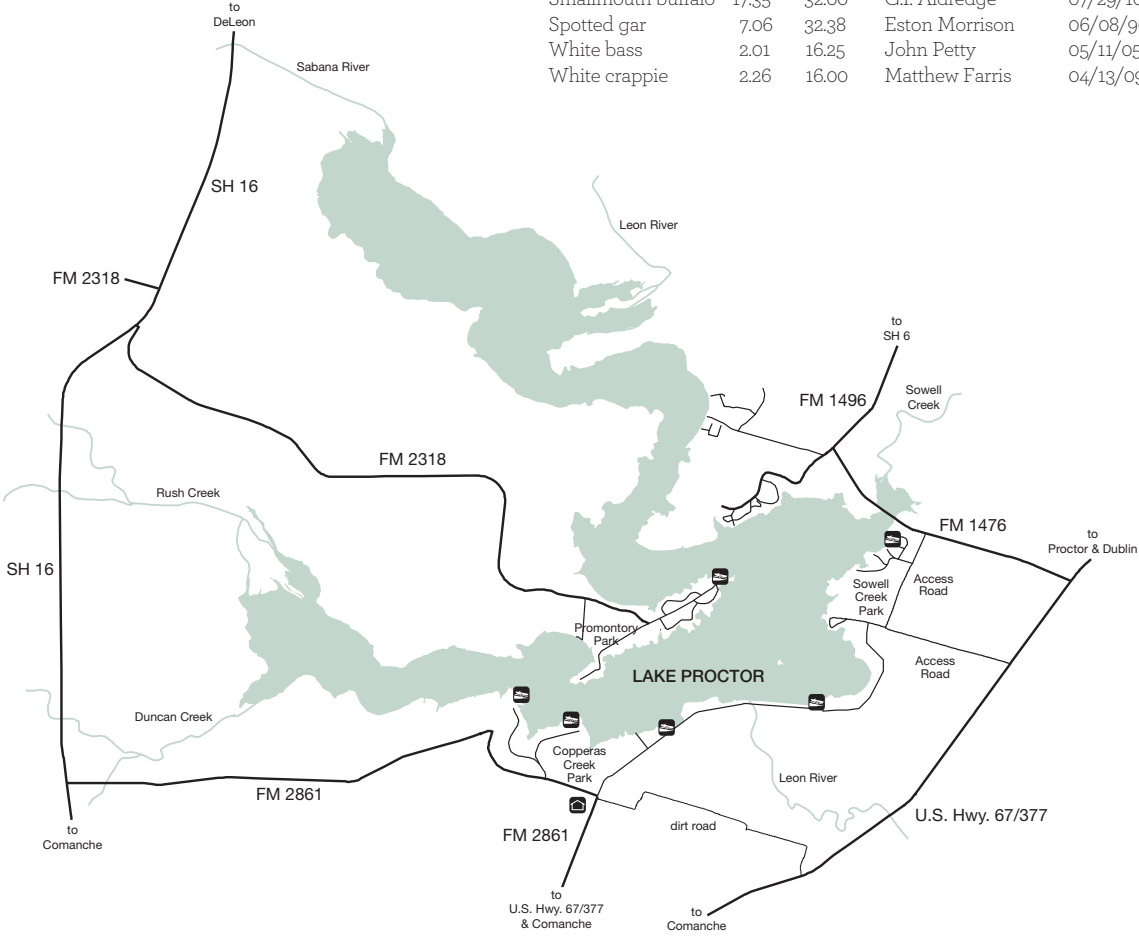


Lake Proctor was impounded in 1963. It is located about 90 miles southeast of Abilene. Recreational facilities are excellent. An access fee is required. The reservoir has good populations of largemouth bass, hybrid striped bass, white bass, channel catfish, blue catfish, flathead catfish and crappie. Lake Proctor is one of the best hybrid striped bass lakes in Texas. **There is a 16-inch minimum length limit on largemouth bass, implemented in September 2002.** Promontory Point Park is closed from October to April. For more information on Lake Proctor, contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at (254) 879-2424. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office. Information is also available online on the

USCOE web site which can be found by searching for Lake Proctor on the Internet. The web site has information on hunting permits, fishing, camping reservations and more.

LAKE PROCTOR RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Black crappie	1.21	12.00	Lee Buchanan	02/24/95
Blue catfish	34.76	38.50	Ryan Klinovsky	08/24/03
Bluegill	0.20	6.37	Robert Maindelle	07/26/04
Channel catfish	1.71	16.00	Jakob Wolf	06/30/08
Common carp	12.14	29.50	Bobby Furlow	04/26/03
Flathead catfish	62.75	50.00	Wayne Barton	04/23/99
Grass carp	45.69	46.00	Dustin Ferguson	05/24/03
Hybrid striped bass	16.31	27.50	Arthur Queisner	03/29/85
Largemouth bass	13.96	27.00	Jason Parsons	05/16/04
Longear sunfish	0.13	4.87	Robert Maindelle	07/26/04
Smallmouth buffalo	17.35	32.00	G.I. Aldredge	07/29/10
Spotted gar	7.06	32.38	Eston Morrison	06/08/96
White bass	2.01	16.25	John Petty	05/11/05
White crappie	2.26	16.00	Matthew Farris	04/13/09



1,854,837 | *The number of hybrid striped bass fingerlings stocked in Lake Proctor from 1978-2010*

Eastland County

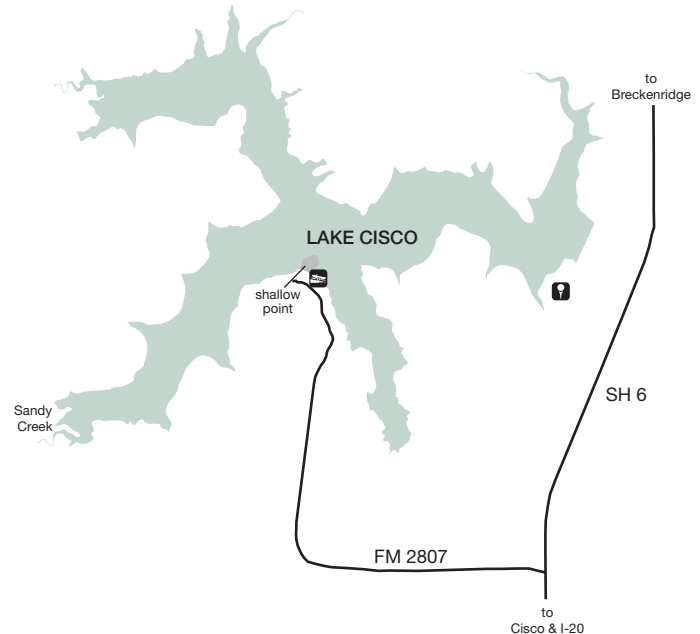
Lake Cisco [1,050 acres]



Lake Cisco was impounded in 1923 and is located about 55 miles east of Abilene. Fishing cover in this clear reservoir ranges from willow trees and brush in the upper end to large boulders and boat docks at the lower end. Largemouth bass are the most sought-after fish. Sunfish are abundant enough and big enough to provide good fishing opportunities. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office or online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/cisco/ For more information about Lake Cisco, contact the City of Cisco at (254) 442-2111.

LAKE CISCO RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Blue catfish	24.56	36.00	Jimmy McCoy	11/28/08
Bluegill	0.85	10.00	Robert McCoy	08/04/08
Channel catfish	10.80	28.75	Larry Chadwick	08/09/08
Common carp	16.55	32.00	Robert McCoy	08/04/08
Flathead catfish	43.03	43.20	David Kanady	04/16/06
Gizzard shad	0.55	11.25	Tyler Murray	08/10/08
Green sunfish	0.42	8.25	Jimmy McCoy	04/19/08
Hybrid striped bass	7.27	25.50	Larry Allen	08/11/96
Largemouth bass	13.20	26.25	Richard Choate	01/27/07
Longear sunfish	0.12	5.25	James Watson	08/04/07
Redbreast sunfish	0.75	10.50	James Murray	07/31/08
Smallmouth bass	4.82	21.00	Ed Stovall	08/07/10
White crappie	2.40	16.00	Jimmy McCoy	02/08/09



Lakes Eastland County and Ringling [100 acres] and Ringling [22 acres]



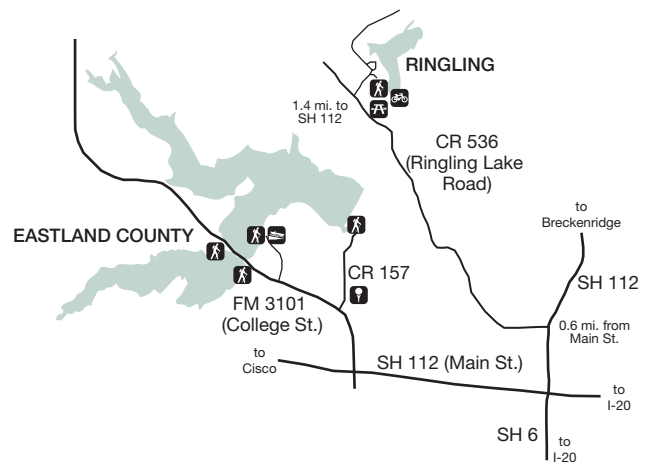
There is an unimproved boat launch and no facilities on Eastland County Lake. Game fish include largemouth bass, white crappie, sunfish and channel catfish. Largemouth bass fishing can be good. Ringling Lake was dry for many years. It filled in 2008 and was stocked with largemouth bass and channel catfish. For more information on these lakes, contact the City of Eastland at (254) 629-3349.

LAKE EASTLAND COUNTY RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Channel catfish	0.48	12.12	John Hardin	04/05/97
Largemouth Bass	6.54	21.00	Ryan Hood	03/10/04
White bass	1.97	15.00	Ryan Hood	03/10/04
Yellow bullhead	0.25	8.50	John Hardin	04/05/97

LAKE RINGLING RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Black bullhead	0.50	9.50	Andrew Dale	05/15/99
Channel catfish	1.77	16.50	Cody Terry	05/15/99
Largemouth bass	1.36	14.25	Jason Williams	05/15/99



2007

Richard Choate's lake record largemouth bass from Lake Cisco was donated to the ShareLunker Program.

Eastland County

Lake Leon [1,590 acres]

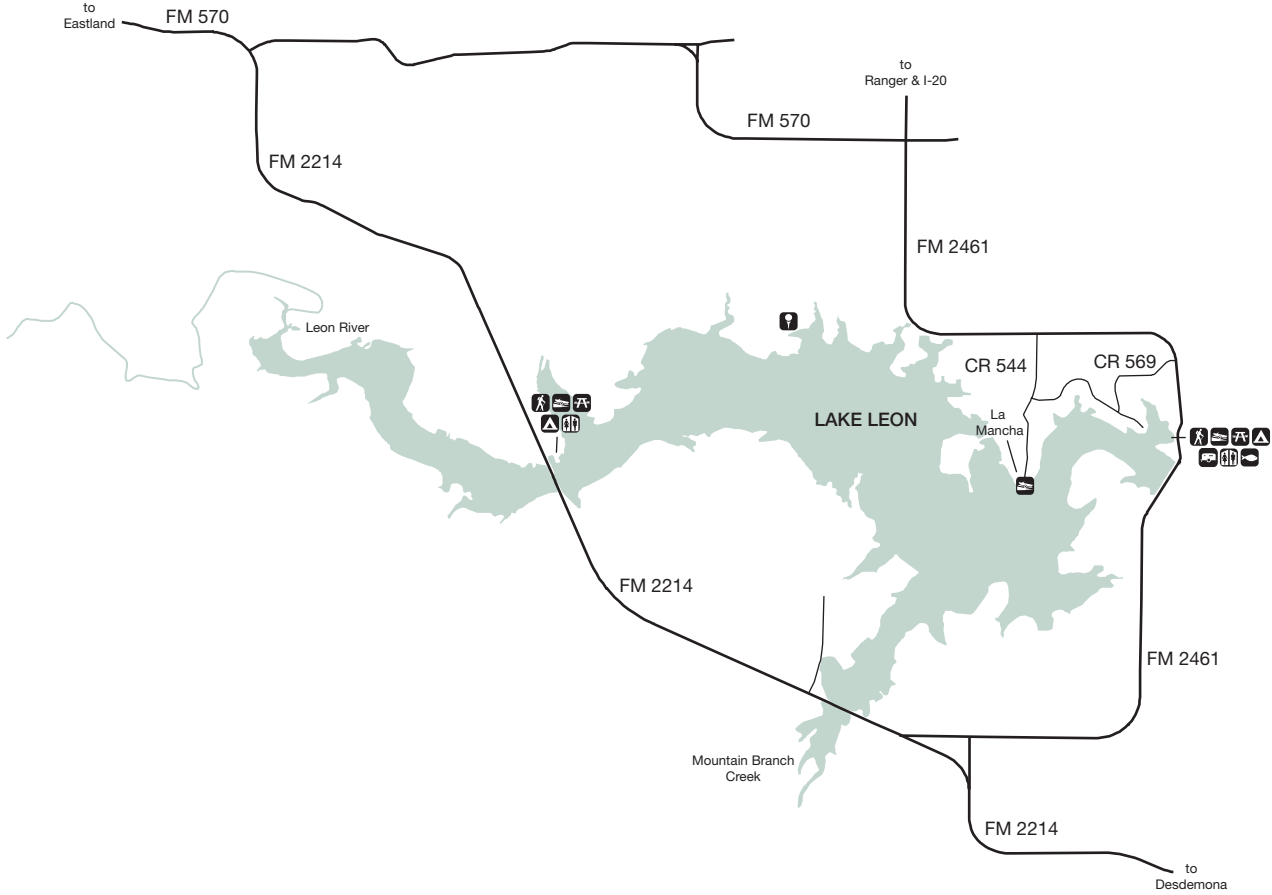


Lake Leon was impounded in 1954 and is located about 65 miles east of Abilene. Recent electrofishing and trap-net surveys showed that largemouth bass and crappie populations were doing well. Lake Leon also has a very good white bass population. Winter fishing for crappie at the La Mancha fishing dock can be very good. Lake Leon has excellent facilities highlighted by La Mancha Lake Ranch (254) 647-3651. These facilities are exceptional and offer a variety of recreational options for family vacationers. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office or online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/leon/

For more information on Lake Leon and its facilities, contact the lake patrol at (254) 647-1976, the Eastland Chamber of Commerce at (254) 629-2322, or visit the Eastland Chamber of Commerce on the Internet. An access fee may be required.

LAKE LEON RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Channel catfish	13.05	29.00	James Towery	10/10/08
Common carp	9.25	26.50	Bud Wood	04/15/04
Grass carp	45.57	40.00	Shane Henderson	10/02/10
Largemouth bass	11.69	26.00	Allen Thomas	11/12/91
Smallmouth buffalo	21.25	34.00	Bud Wood	06/15/05
Spotted gar	12.84	46.75	Shane Henderson	05/25/10
White bass	4.31	18.00	Jeremy Perry	04/11/99



1975 | Lakes Brownwood and Leon were the first reservoirs in the Big Country to be stocked with Florida largemouth bass.

Haskell County

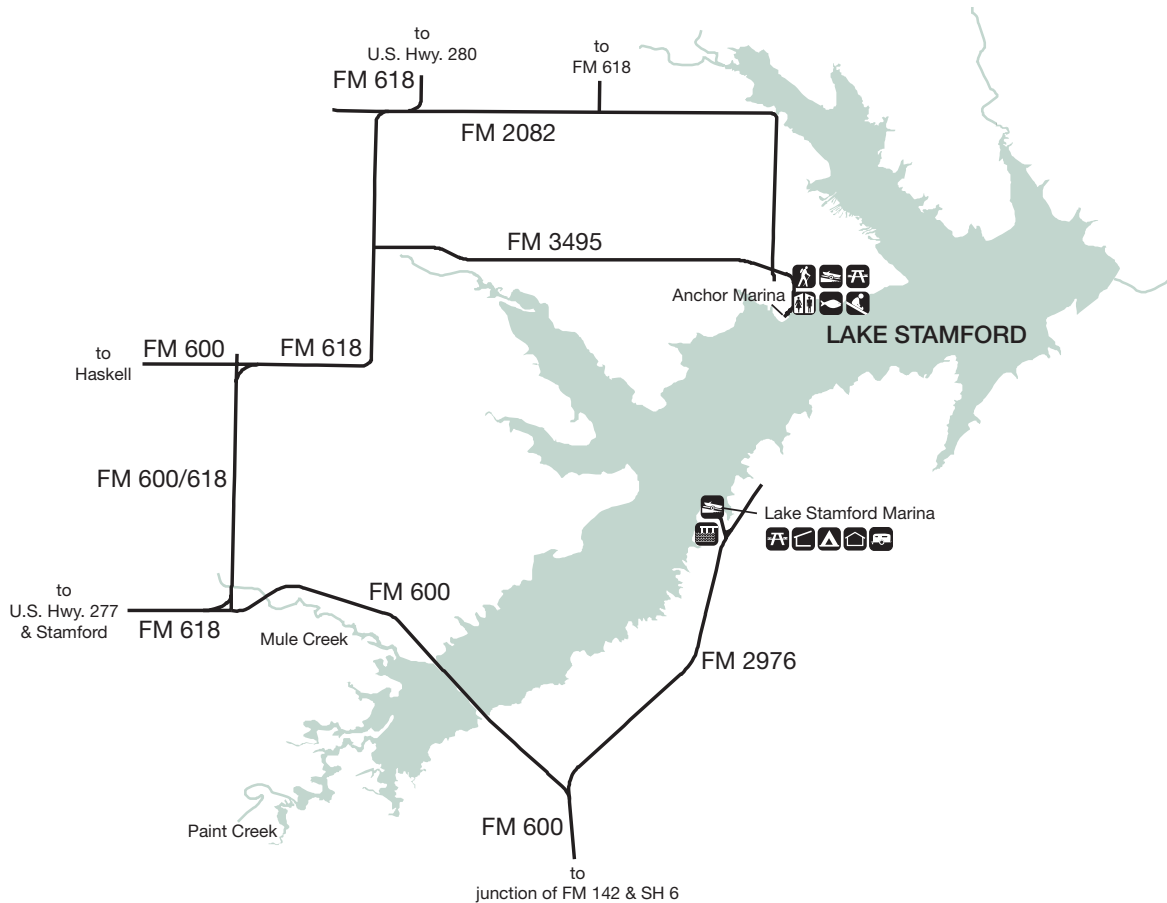
Lake Stamford [5,200 acres]



Lake Stamford was impounded in 1953 and is located about 61 miles north of Abilene. High water levels for several years have been a boom for fish populations and habitat. The bulrush is back, along with floating-leaf pondweed and lily pads. Crappie and largemouth bass fishing has been fantastic the last few years. There is no reason to doubt that the next few years will be any different. White bass are plentiful and can provide good fishing opportunities. Lake Stamford supports excellent catfish angling as well. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office or online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/stamford/. For more information on Lake Stamford, contact Lake Stamford Marina at (325) 773-2095.

LAKE STAMFORD RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Blue catfish	34.00	43.00	Benny Gibbs	11/06/00
Bluegill	0.26	6.25	James Watson	07/14/07
Channel catfish	12.35	29.00	James Towery	06/11/07
Flathead catfish	64.50	50.00	Marvin Baros	05/09/01
Freshwater drum	0.90	12.50	James Watson	07/14/07
Green sunfish	0.10	5.00	James Watson	07/14/07
Hybrid striped bass	10.00	28.00	Jeanie Snow	07/31/94
Largemouth bass	11.12	25.25	Mike Pruitt	05/05/09
Longear sunfish	0.12	4.75	James Watson	07/14/07
Longnose gar	12.58	49.50	James Watson	07/14/07
White crappie	1.83	14.25	Roy Bamberg	03/16/95



Jones County

Lake Fort Phantom Hill [4,246 acres]



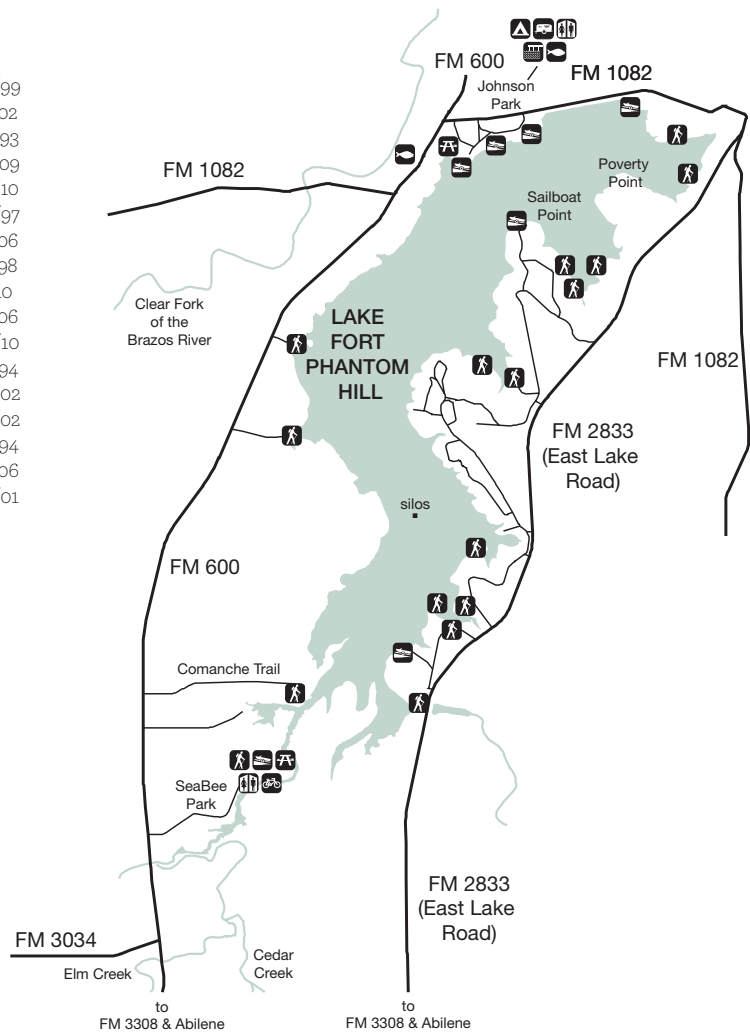
Lake Fort Phantom Hill was impounded in 1938 and is located about 15 miles north of Abilene. It has excellent shore-fishing access, two low-water boat ramps when the lake is 11 feet low or lower and five public boat ramps when the lake is full. This reservoir filled up in 2007 and high and relatively stable water levels since 2004 have resulted in great improvements for fish populations. Game fish populations include largemouth bass, white crappie, white bass, hybrid striped bass, channel catfish, blue catfish and flathead catfish. Hybrid striped bass stockings are requested every year and, with the exception of a few bad production years, Lake Fort Phantom Hill has been stocked every year since 1983. White bass have flourished in recent years, and crappie fishing is excellent. **There is a 16-inch minimum length limit on largemouth bass.** A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office or online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/fort_phantom/ For more information on Lake Fort Phantom Hill, contact the City of Abilene at (325) 676-6405 or the lake patrol at (325) 660-6393.

LAKE FORT PHANTOM HILL RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bighead carp	65.00	51.00	Andy Tapia	03/05/99
Blue catfish	36.76	41.50	Thomas/Gwynn	03/14/02
Channel catfish	5.82	24.25	Gary Sutton	03/24/93
Common carp	5.52	22.50	Bill Fairbetter	06/19/09
Flathead catfish	65.50	47.25	Rusty Thompson	05/04/10
Freshwater drum	20.70	28.25	Don Parsons	04/04/97
Green sunfish	0.30	7.25	Logan Cole	04/15/06
Hybrid striped bass	15.25	26.30	Nathan Winkle	04/21/98
Largemouth bass	10.42	-	Russell McGuire	12/12/10
Longear sunfish	0.10	5.00	Logan Cole	04/15/06
Longnose gar	18.82	50.00	Zac Conner	05/09/10
Red bellied pacu	1.13	11.50	Roy Weaver	08/16/94
Smallmouth buffalo	19.50	32.25	Douglas Current	05/04/02
Threadfin shad	0.04	5.00	Logan Cole	05/30/02
Walleye	8.19	25.50	Emmet Musser	03/10/94
White bass	1.56	15.25	Robert Cole	04/14/06
White crappie	2.73	15.50	Kenneth Adkins	02/08/01



The average length and weight of lake record crappie in the Big Country is 15 inches and 2.15 pounds.



Jones County

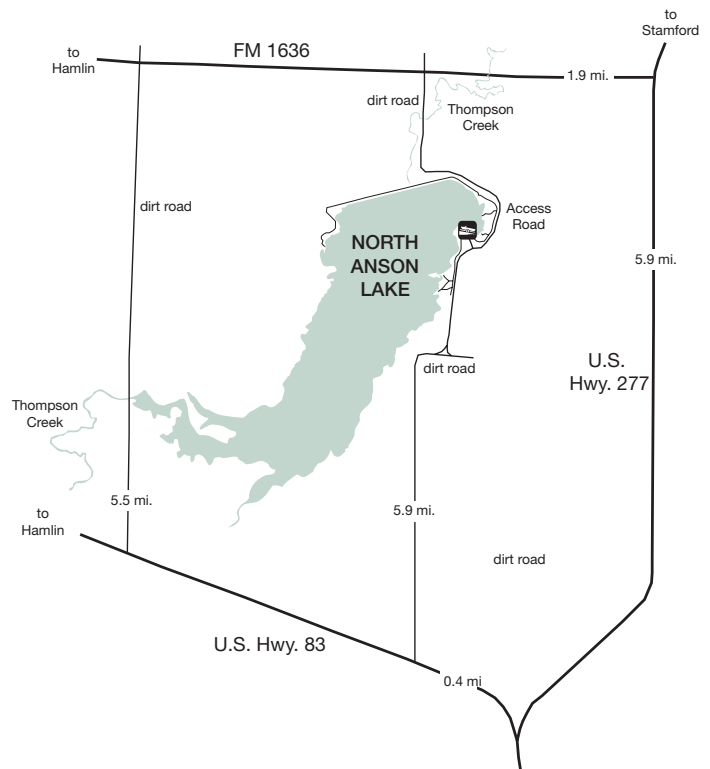
North Anson Lake [250 acres]



North Anson Lake was impounded in 1950 and is located about 30 miles north of Abilene. An access fee may be required. The primary fishing cover is bulrush. The best fishing is for largemouth bass and white crappie. This lake is known for its catches of trophy largemouth bass. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office. For more information about North Anson Lake, contact the City of Anson at (325) 823-2411.

NORTH ANSON LAKE RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Blue catfish	22.09	35.00	Gerald Paulton	09/29/92
Bluegill	0.24	6.25	James Watson	07/29/07
Green sunfish	0.10	5.25	James Watson	07/29/07
Largemouth bass	11.54	24.75	Jack Wills	02/03/95
Longear sunfish	0.12	5.00	James Watson	07/29/07
White crappie	1.22	12.25	Billy Hughes	05/11/97



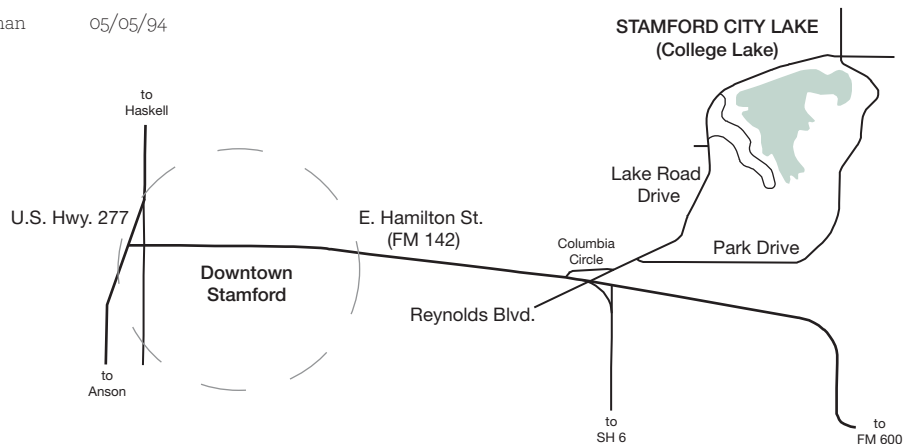
Stamford City Lake (College Lake) [10 acres]



This small reservoir is located in Stamford and has excellent access for float tubes or small bass-buster boats. It is very turbid and red-colored. Fish populations primarily consist of largemouth bass and catfish. For more information on Stamford City, contact Stamford Information and Business at (325) 773-2591.

STAMFORD CITY LAKE RECORD

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Largemouth bass	6.39	21.25	Lee Buchanan	05/05/94



Nolan County

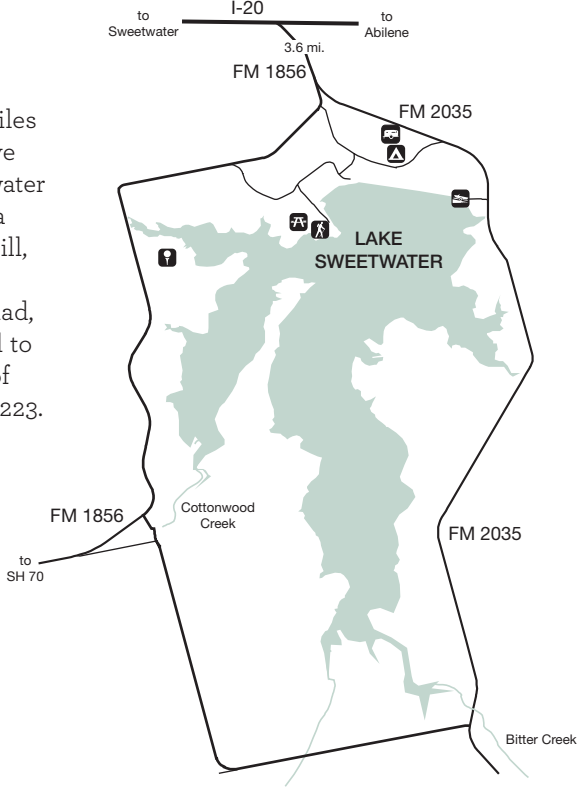
Lake Sweetwater [630 acres]



Lake Sweetwater was impounded in 1930 and is located about 45 miles west of Abilene. Water level dropped for nine years before a massive rain event in summer 2007 put over 40 foot of water into Lake Sweetwater in just one day. Since then the lake has been restocked with Florida largemouth bass (including Sharelunker bass), white crappie, bluegill, channel catfish, gizzard shad, threadfin shad and inland silversides. Electrofishing and trap net surveys in 2009 showed that bluegill, shad, largemouth bass and crappie populations have responded very well to “new reservoir” conditions. For more information contact the City of Sweetwater at (325) 235-4166 or Pappy’s Bait and Grill at (325) 235-1223.

LAKE SWEETWATER RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bluegill	1.30	9.75	Kendal Mahoney	06/05/09
Chanel catfish	3.63	22.75	Kendal Mahoney	06/05/09
Common carp	6.38	26.25	Kendal Mahoney	06/05/09
Flathead catfish	34.00	39.00	Robert Kamer	05/16/00
Golden shiner	0.24	8.00	Robin Stedham	08/10/97
Largemouth bass	13.41	24.00	Spencer Dumont	03/17/01
Longear sunfish	0.20	6.25	Robyn Cole	05/21/94
Redbreast sunfish	0.42	8.88	Robert Cole	05/21/94
Warmouth	0.12	5.75	Robyn Cole	05/14/99
White bass	1.05	14.25	Robyn Cole	05/14/99
White crappie	2.15	15.50	Garrett Muncy	03/28/10



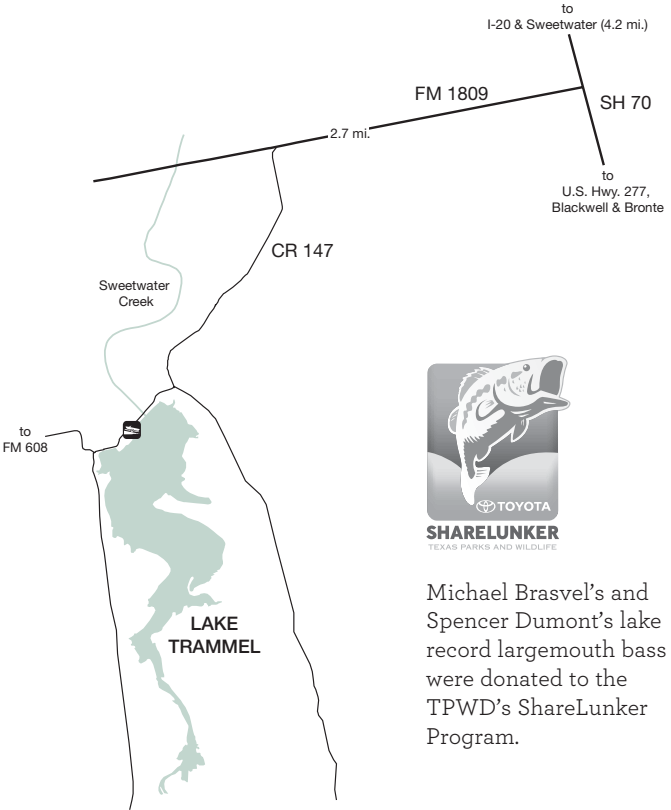
Lake Trammel [110 acres]



This reservoir was impounded in 1915, and it is located approximately 55 miles west of Abilene. Water level is partially maintained with water from Oak Creek Lake. Game fish present include bluegill, redbreast sunfish, redear sunfish, channel catfish, blue catfish, flathead catfish, white bass, white crappie and largemouth bass. An access fee may be required. There is a concrete boat ramp, and shore-fishing access is excellent. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office. For more information on Lake Trammel, contact the City of Sweetwater at (325) 236-6952 or the lake warden at (325) 235-5191.

LAKE TRAMMEL RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Largemouth bass	13.50	26.25	Michael Brasvel	02/10/97
White bass	4.38	16.75	Larry Harding	05/01/93
White crappie	2.25	16.00	Richard Mentel	10/15/00



Michael Brasvel’s and Spencer Dumont’s lake record largemouth bass were donated to the TPWD’s ShareLunker Program.

Runnels County

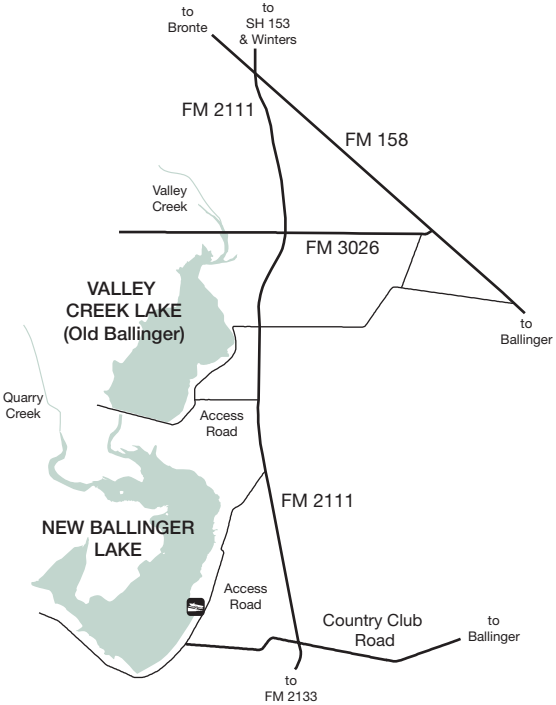
Lakes New Ballinger [575 acres] and Valley Creek (Old Ballinger) [187 acres]



Situated 50 miles south of Abilene, both of these lakes were severely impacted by drought from 1997 to 2003. However, they caught significant water in fall of 2004. New Ballinger Lake was stocked with adult gizzard shad, bluegill, white crappie, Florida largemouth bass, channel catfish and walleye in 2005. Valley Creek Lake was stocked with channel catfish and adult bluegill in 2005. Anglers should now be seeing the benefits of these stocking efforts. For more information, contact the San Angelo Inland Fisheries District Office at (325) 651-5556.

NEW BALLINGER LAKE RECORDS

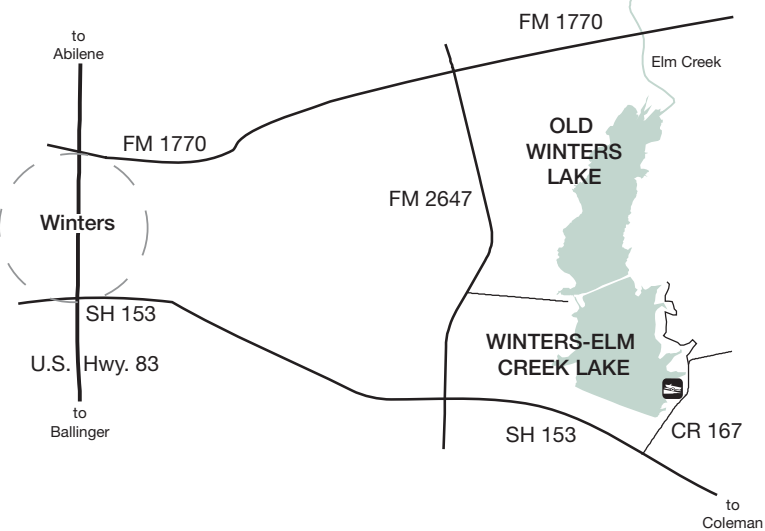
Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Common carp	4.40	21.87	Bob Morrison	06/11/02
Largemouth bass	10.80	25.00	Bobby Lockhart	08/22/99
White bass	2.13	16.00	John Ingle	01/01/97



Lakes Winters-Elm Creek [337 acres] and Old Winters [150 acres]



Old Winters Lake was connected to Winters-Elm via a small canal when Winters-Elm was constructed in 1982. They are about 40 miles south of Abilene. Old Winters is a shallow, old and very muddy reservoir known for good catfish (blue catfish were stocked in 2006), but sometimes has a surprisingly good crappie population. Winters-Elm Creek is known for big largemouth bass and good crappie fishing. Other game fish include catfish and sunfish. An access fee may be required at Winters-Elm. For more information, contact the City of Winters at (325) 754-4424, the bait store on Winters-Elm at (325) 723-2081 or the San Angelo Inland Fisheries District Office at (325) 651-5556.



WINTERS-ELM CREEK LAKE RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Black crappie	2.31	16.00	Warren Stroud	03/26/99
Flathead catfish	26.22	36.50	Keith Fry	03/21/06
Largemouth bass	12.13	26.00	Richard McCuiston	03/11/01
White bass	2.70	17.00	Michael Fry	03/23/06
White crappie	1.45	13.75	Charles Fry	03/12/01

Runnels County

O.H. Ivie Reservoir [19,200 acres]

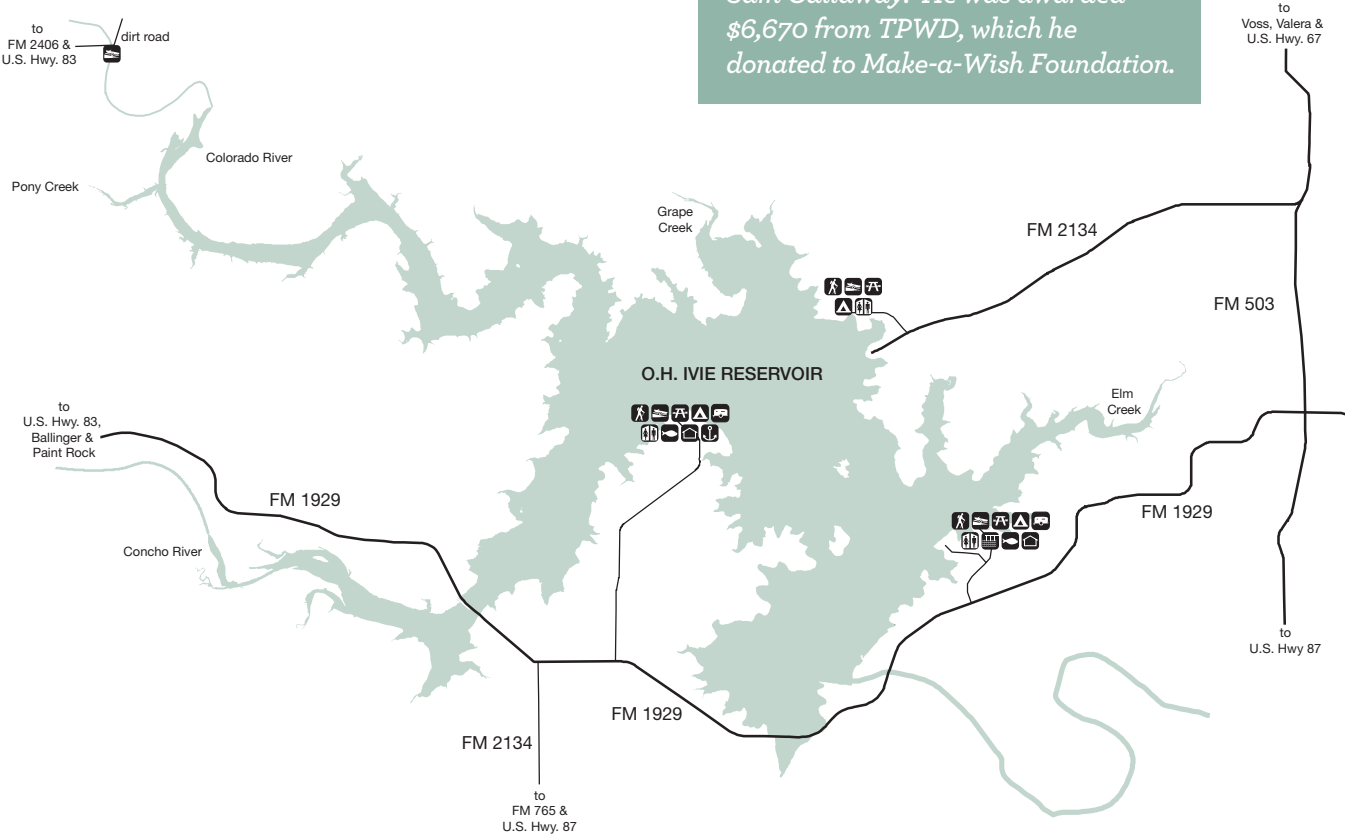


O.H. Ivie Reservoir was impounded in 1990 and is located about 80 miles south of Abilene. The reservoir is a consistent producer of trophy largemouth bass. It is also known for large bluegill and has a decent crappie population. The reservoir supports a popular jug and trot-line fishery for catfish. **For largemouth bass there is no minimum length limit (MLL). For smallmouth bass the MLL is 18 inches. The daily bag is five bass in any combination of which no more than three fish can be smallmouth bass. Up to five largemouth bass may be retained; however, only two can be less than 18 inches.** The reservoir has excellent facilities. A contour map is available at local sporting goods stores or online. Guide services are also available. For more information on O.H. Ivie Reservoir, contact Concho Marina (325) 357-4466, Elm Creek Marina (325) 357-4776, the San Angelo Inland Fisheries District Office at (325) 651-5556 or the Colorado River Municipal Water District at (325) 357-4486. An Internet search for O.H. Ivie Reservoir can also provide abundant sources of information and contacts.

O.H. IVIE RESERVOIR RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Black crappie	2.31	16.00	Warren Stroud	03/26/99
Blue catfish	78.50	49.00	Kyle Blevins	03/28/09
Bluegill	1.02	11.00	Linda Sumrall	07/08/03
Channel catfish	27.45	37.00	Terry Winchester	03/04/00
Common carp	7.23	25.25	Paul Cobb	10/15/09
Flathead catfish	68.50	49.00	Sherwin Evans	05/20/96
Freshwater drum	6.20	25.00	Melvin Rose	03/26/00
Hybrid striped bass	16.40	30.00	Dianne Sumrall	04/12/03
Largemouth bass	16.08	28.00	Jerry Bales	04/30/10
Longnose gar	17.00	58.00	Kelli White	05/25/09
Smallmouth bass	5.32	22.00	Michael Schooler	04/19/09
Smallmouth buffalo	29.00	37.00	Mark White	05/25/09
Striped bass	13.25	30.00	Sam Keel	02/10/95
Walleye	3.31	22.00	Jim Schwarz	08/28/93
White bass	2.84	19.25	Austin Terry	07/23/94
White crappie	2.74	16.50	Nina Brewer	03/09/93

One of 11 ShareLunker largemouth bass caught at O. H. Ivie during the 2010 season was #500 caught by Sam Callaway. He was awarded \$6,670 from TPWD, which he donated to Make-a-Wish Foundation.

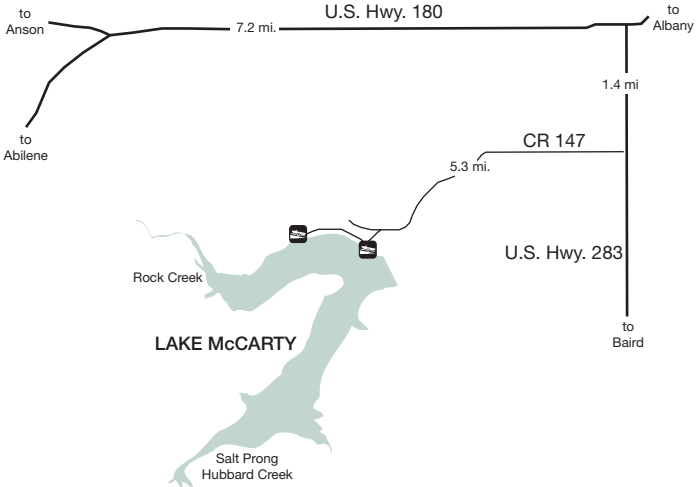


Shackelford County

Lake McCarty [188 acres]



This productive reservoir, located about 45 miles northeast of Abilene, is known mostly for its quality fishing for crappie and largemouth bass. Boats have to be launched from unimproved boat-launching areas. No facilities exist at this reservoir. Caution: CR 147 is a dirt road that can be bad at times. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office. Contact the City of Albany at (325) 762-3133 for more information.



LAKE McCARTY RECORDS

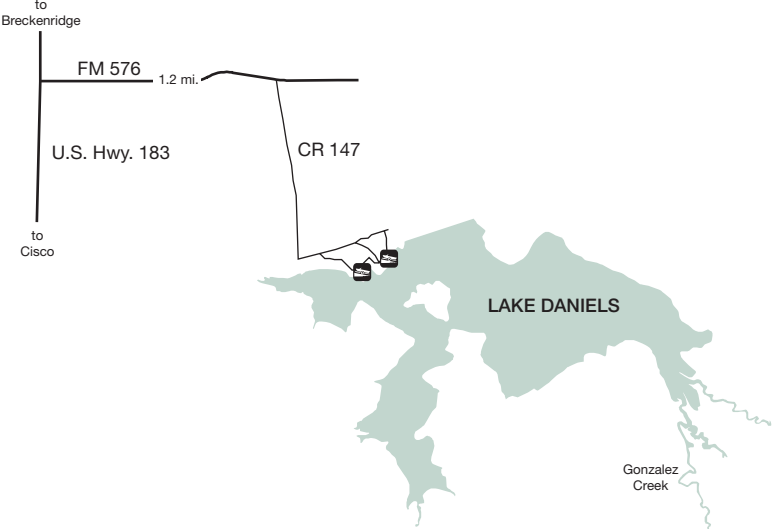
Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Black crappie	1.48	13.75	Lee Buchanan	03/09/91
Bluegill	0.16	6.00	James Watson	07/29/09
Green sunfish	0.22	7.00	James Watson	07/29/09
Largemouth bass	11.11	24.88	Paul Jaworski	04/16/96
Longear sunfish	0.12	5.00	James Watson	07/29/09
White crappie	2.39	15.25	C.W. Smith	04/16/00

Stephens County

Lake Daniels [950 acres]



Lake Daniels filled in summer 2007 after years of being so low it nearly dried up. Largemouth bass, crappie, catfish, bluegill and shad populations were decimated. Stockings of Florida largemouth bass, bluegill, channel catfish and crappie in 2007-2008 were extremely successful and now there are some great fishing opportunities. The lake is also full of big black bullheads (pollywogs), which can be fun to catch, especially for children. For more information on available facilities, call the Breckenridge Chamber of Commerce at (254) 559-2301.



LAKE DANIELS RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Common Carp	3.00	19.31	Bob Morrison	07/16/01
Largemouth Bass	12.00	25.00	William Horeis	07/04/98
White Crappie	2.57	15.75	Billy Hill	06/03/99

A Big Country record 110 crappie were caught per net in a 1997 survey of the crappie population at Lake Daniels. An average catch in the Big Country is 19 crappie per net.

Stephens County

Hubbard Creek Lake [15,250 acres]

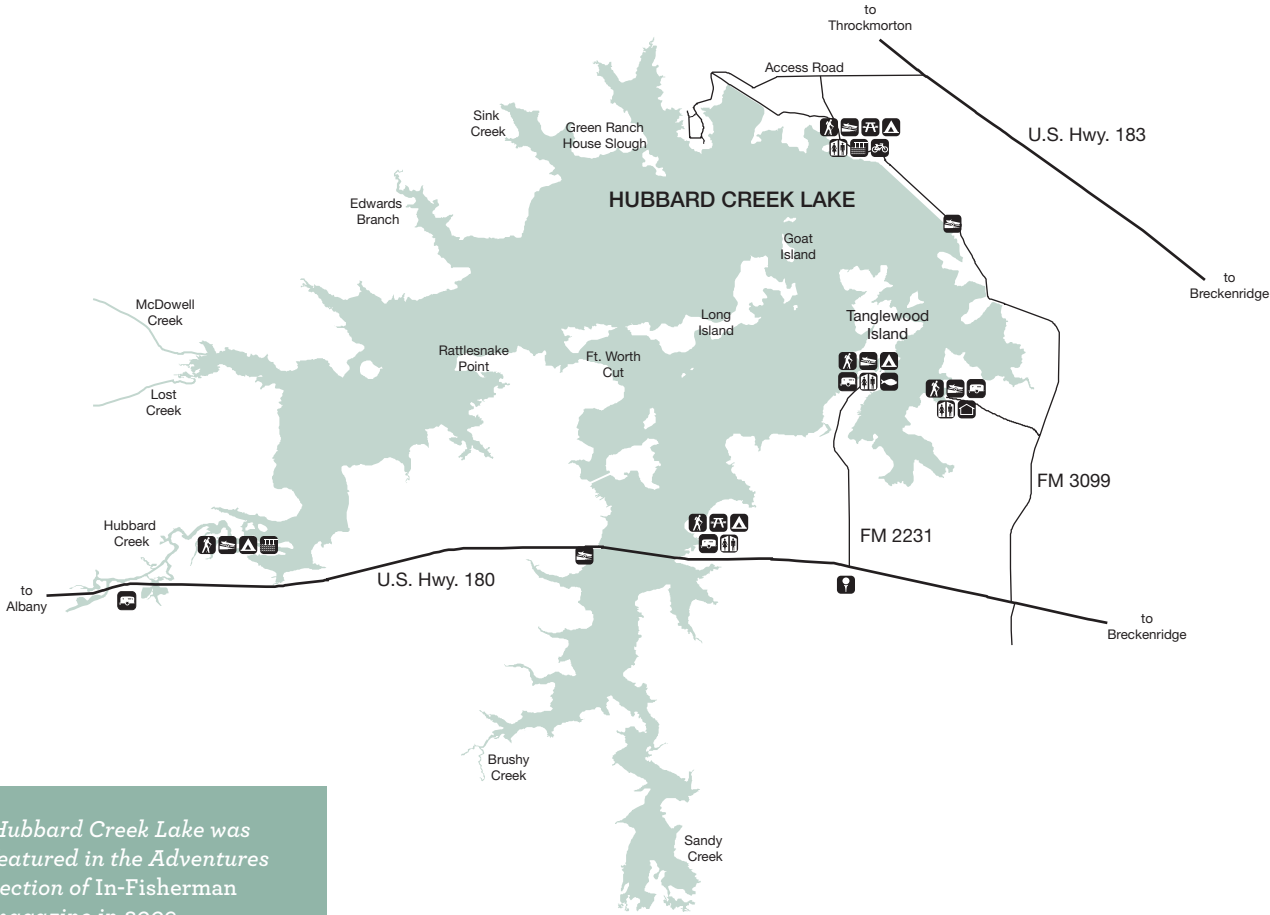


Hubbard Creek Lake was impounded in 1962 and is located about 60 miles northeast of Abilene. It filled in summer 2007 and now populations of largemouth bass, white crappie, catfish and white bass are as great as ever. At a higher water level, Hubbard Creek Lake is the home to some of the best winter crappie fishing in the area. Fishing Sandy Creek and Hubbard Creek, where the lake necks down to the creek only, is great for crappie from late November through February. Hubbard Creek Lake has hydrilla scattered throughout the reservoir. Boat-launching facilities include a public boat ramp (located on FM 3099 on the east end of the dam), funded and constructed by local anglers and businesses, that is recommended when water levels are more than 10 feet below spillway level. For more information on available facilities, call the Breckenridge Chamber of Commerce at (254) 559-2301 or visit the Breckenridge Chamber of Commerce on the Internet. For more information on

reservoir conditions, call the West Central Texas Municipal Water District at (325) 673-8254 or visit their web site.

HUBBARD CREEK LAKE RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Blue catfish	42.50	43.75	T. Law/K. Mansfield	11/23/02
Bluegill	0.24	6.50	James Watson	05/17/09
Channel catfish	3.62	20.50	James Watson	06/13/09
Common carp	5.16	22.25	Clayton Lohse	07/22/03
Freshwater drum	0.80	12.50	James Watson	06/13/09
Hybrid striped bass	12.52	27.00	Larry Ringener	05/18/96
Largemouth bass	12.64	25.00	Bill Horeis	02/15/06
Longear sunfish	0.14	5.25	James Watson	05/17/09
Longnose gar	19.98	55.25	Clayton Lohse	07/31/03
Smallmouth buffalo	13.64	28.00	Joe McCauley	04/07/96
Spotted gar	2.22	24.75	Clayton Lohse	07/22/03
White bass	1.71	15.50	Sue Ringener	06/18/06
White crappie	2.43	--	Dacey Clark	03/17/08



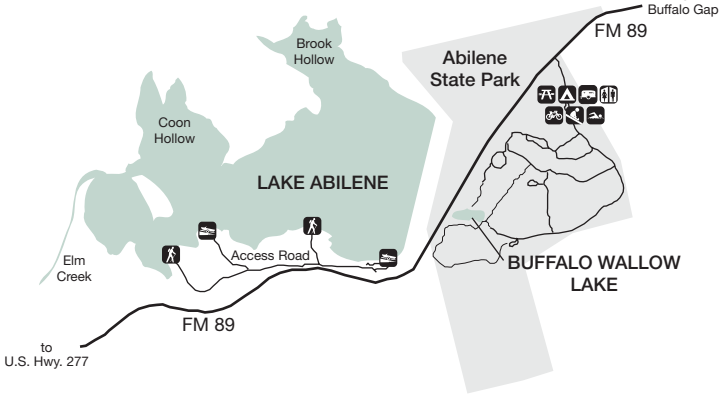
Hubbard Creek Lake was featured in the Adventures section of In-Fisherman magazine in 2009.

Taylor County

Lake Abilene [640 acres] and Buffalo Wallow [1 acre]



These lakes are located about 20 miles south of Abilene in Abilene State Park. Fishing opportunities at Lake Abilene are excellent for channel catfish, largemouth bass and white crappie. Two public boat ramps are available when water levels are high. Four-wheel drive is necessary to launch a boat at lower water levels. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office or online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/abilene/ Buffalo Wallow is located within Abilene State Park. It is stocked with rainbow trout every winter and channel catfish every fall. It also has largemouth bass and bluegill. Abilene State Park has excellent camping and picnicking facilities. Contact Abilene State Park at (325) 572-3204 or visit the TPWD web site.



BUFFALO WALLOW RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bluegill	0.17	6.25	Patrick Sprowl	10/05/95
Green sunfish	0.24	7.25	Christine Reeves	09/21/96
Rainbow trout	0.75	12.75	Bradford Reeves	01/17/97
Redear sunfish	0.25	7.13	Bradford Reeves	08/17/96

LAKE ABILENE RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Blue catfish	49.12	44.00	Victor Aquirre	01/25/94
Flathead catfish	52.50	47.75	Larry Johnson	05/29/92
Hybrid striped bass	10.21	26.00	Rick Miller	04/22/94
Largemouth bass	12.26	25.50	Keith Fry	03/13/10
White crappie	2.90	16.50	Don Warren	03/16/92

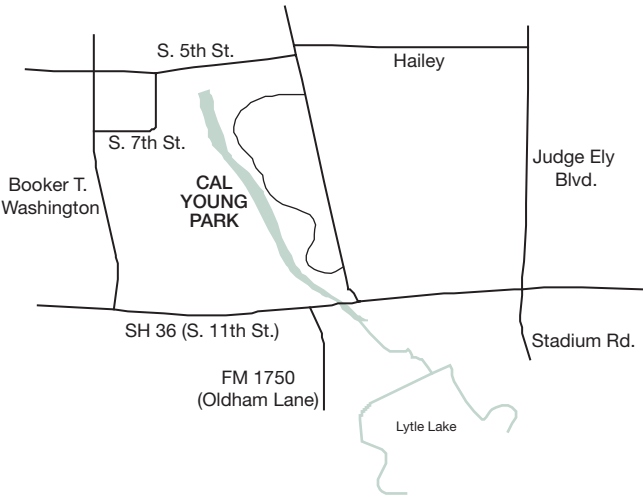
Cal Young Park [5 acres]



Cal Young Park is located in Abilene. Boats are not allowed. The park is closed from midnight to 6 a.m. The most common fish are sunfish and channel catfish. There is good bank-fishing access. Other recreational activities include disc golf, roller hockey, playground and baseball fields. Contact City of Abilene at (325) 676-6217.

CAL YOUNG PARK RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Channel catfish	1.46	16.00	Mukhtar Farooqi	06/21/07
Common carp	5.18	23.50	Bill Fairbetter	03/18/09
Largemouth bass	7.62	25.00	Ben Burnett	04/12/01
Redtail catfish	1.48	14.76	Douglas Pal	07/27/02
White crappie	1.20	13.00	Kris Dosser	04/23/09



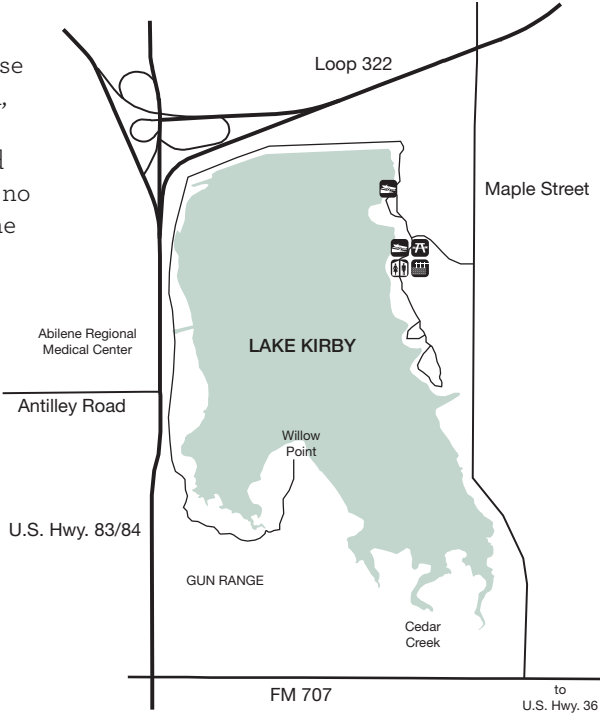
Lake Abilene has the Big Country's largest lake record crappie, a 2.90-pound fish caught in 1992.

Taylor County

Lake Kirby [740 acres]



Located in Abilene, Lake Kirby is one of the Big Country's most productive reservoirs. Since the reservoir filled in 2002, it has maintained a high and stable water level with help from City reuse water. It has fantastic populations of blue catfish, channel catfish, bluegill, largemouth bass and saugeye. White crappie fishing is good at times as well. There is excellent bank-fishing access and two public boat ramps. A contour map of the lake is available, at no charge, from the Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office or online at www.tpwd.state.tx.us/fishboat/fish/recreational/lakes/kirby/ Contact City of Abilene (325) 676-6217.



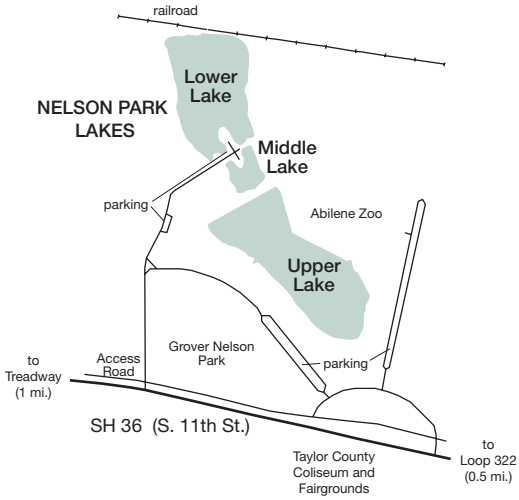
LAKE KIRBY RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Bighead carp	90.00	52.50	Tim Conner	07/24/00
Blue catfish	23.50	31.50	Terry Beggs	06/19/10
Bluegill	0.32	6.50	James Watson	06/10/07
Channel catfish	12.92	30.00	Von Hammons	08/19/09
Common carp	8.72	29.00	Bill Fairbetter	05/15/09
Flathead catfish	42.02	44.00	Lyle Hahn	09/08/10
Freshwater drum	10.16	25.25	Tony Bates	07/19/97
Green sunfish	0.14	5.50	Logan Cole	06/03/04
Largemouth bass	10.49	24.00	Jay Stevens	01/17/09
Red-bellied pacu	0.74	10.25	Henry Pittman	10/07/03
Saugeye	7.78	27.00	Robert Quintanilla	01/26/98
White crappie	2.42	15.25	Gus Culpepper	05/28/96

Nelson Park Lakes [25 acres total]



These three lakes are located in Abilene. The Middle pond is stocked with rainbow trout every winter. Black bullheads (pollywogs) are abundant in the Upper Lake making it an excellent location to take kids fishing. Other fish include channel catfish and sunfish. Other recreational activities include a playground, softball fields, walking paths and the Abilene Zoo. Contact City of Abilene (325) 676-6217.



NELSON PARK LAKE RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Black bullhead	0.79	11.25	Robert Leucht	06/10/95
Bluegill	0.17	6.25	Stephanie Goodwin	06/08/96
Channel catfish	8.96	28.00	Bill Fairbetter	08/21/09
Common carp	10.50	28.00	Bill Fairbetter	09/18/08
Goldfish	1.95	16.00	Matt Kemp	06/08/96
Green sunfish	0.22	6.75	Kyle Sloan	06/10/95
Longear sunfish	0.14	5.00	B.J. Hernandez	06/08/96
Rainbow trout	0.35	10.00	Miguel Sanchez	12/04/93

1998 | *The state record saugeye (7.78 pounds) was caught at Lake Kirby.*

Throckmorton County

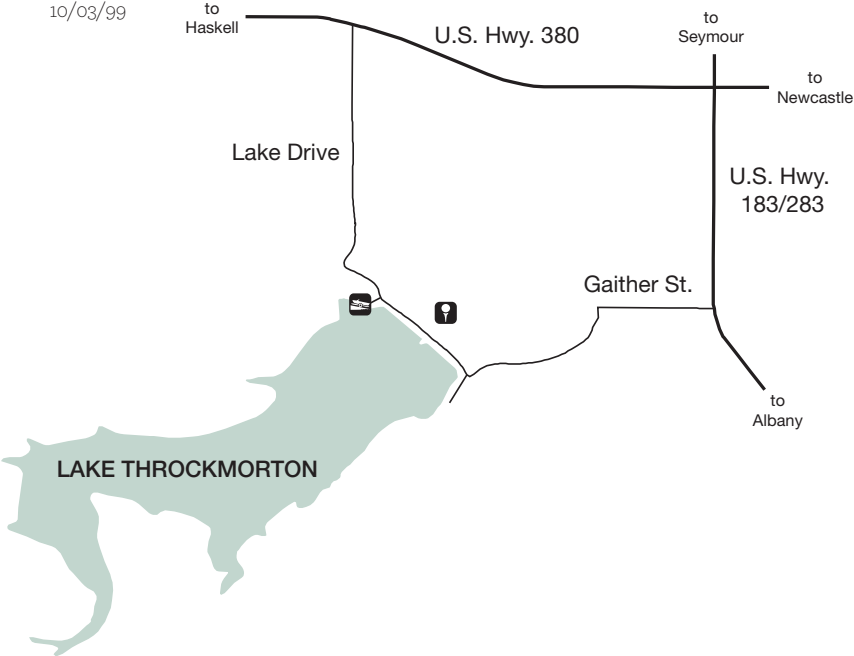
Lake Throckmorton [139 acres]



This reservoir is located about 75 miles northeast of Abilene. It offers excellent largemouth bass fishing opportunities. The boat ramp is unusable at lower water levels. For more information on Throckmorton Lake, contact the City of Throckmorton at (940) 849-4411.

LAKE THROCKMORTON RECORDS

Species	Weight	Length	Angler	Date
Largemouth bass	4.60	19.50	Leland Miller	10/03/99
White crappie	1.87	15.50	Leland Miller	10/03/99



The average weight of lake record bass in the Big Country is

10.80 pounds

Big Country Fishes



Largemouth Bass

Two subspecies of largemouth bass exist in Texas: native (northern) and Florida. These subspecies are visually indistinguishable, although they may be distinguished by genetic testing procedures. The largemouth bass is one of the most sought-after fish in Texas. The state record was captured from Lake Fork in 1992 and weighed 18.18 pounds.

In Texas, spawning begins in the spring when water temperatures reach about 60°F. Largemouth bass prefer to nest in quieter, more vegetated water than other black bass, but will use any substrate besides soft mud. Nests are usually built in two to eight feet of water. Once the female lays thousands of eggs, she is chased away by the male who then guards the eggs. The young, called fry, hatch in five to ten days and remain in a school. Male largemouth bass continue to guard their fry for several days after hatching. Fry feed primarily on zooplankton and insect larvae. At about two inches in length, they become active predators. Adults feed almost exclusively on other fish and large invertebrates such as crayfish.



Crappie

There are two species of crappie in the Big Country: white and black. White crappie are far more common and are present in all area reservoirs, while black crappie are found in only a few. White crappie have several vertical bars on their sides, and the dorsal fin has a maximum of six spines. Black crappie are speckled and have seven or eight dorsal spines. Male crappie develop dark coloration during the spring spawning season. White crappie in excess of 4.5 pounds have been landed in Texas waters.

Like other members of the sunfish family, crappie are nest builders. They are similar to bluegills in that they tend to nest in relatively large “beds,” and they have very high reproductive potential, which often leads to overpopulation and stunting in small ponds. Crappie spawn in the spring, generally when water temperatures reach 65°F to 70°F. However, spawning activity has been observed at temperatures as low as 56°F. Fry hatch in three to five days, but remain attached to nest substrate by an adhesive substance on the egg for a few more days. Although fry do not appear to school, fingerlings do. Schools with large numbers of individuals are often found in the middle of reservoirs. Adults feed on small fish and insects.



Sunfishes (Perch)

Several sunfish species (often called “perch”) are common in Big Country reservoirs. Sunfish are a vital part of many freshwater fisheries in Texas. Many anglers begin their fishing careers by catching sunfish. Sunfish begin spawning when water temperatures reach about 70°F. Spawning may peak in May or June, but continues until water temperatures cool in the fall. Sunfish spawn in beds or colonies, on sand or gravel, and in one to three feet of water. Males guard the nest until the eggs hatch and fry leave. Sunfish have very high reproductive potential and produce large numbers of fry and fingerlings. Sunfish feed on a variety of items including zooplankton, aquatic insects and their larvae, snails, crawfish and small fish. Sunfish are found in small creeks, large rivers, ponds and reservoirs throughout Texas.

Bluegill may be distinguished from other sunfish by the dark spot at the base of the dorsal fin, vertical bars on the sides and a relatively small mouth. The **green sunfish**, like the warmouth, has a large mouth and a heavy, black-bass body shape. **Redbreast sunfish** have a yellow belly that is sometimes an orange or rusty color. It might have been better named the

Big Country Fishes

longear, as its opercle (ear) flap is considerably longer than the ear flap of the longear sunfish. The redbreast is one of our larger sunfish, occasionally attaining weights of one pound. **Longear sunfish** have an ear flap that is always trimmed in white. Longear sunfish are quite colorful. Males are often bright orange or scarlet, and the head and fins usually have turquoise markings. Adult **warmouth** are dark with mottled brown coloration and have small teeth on the tongue. The **redecor sunfish** is a deep-bodied sunfish with a relatively small mouth. The redear's most distinct characteristic is the red edge on the ear flap of the male (orange on the female). Redear sunfish often eat snails, hence the alias "shellcracker."



Hybrid Striped Bass



White Bass

Hybrid Striped Bass and White Bass

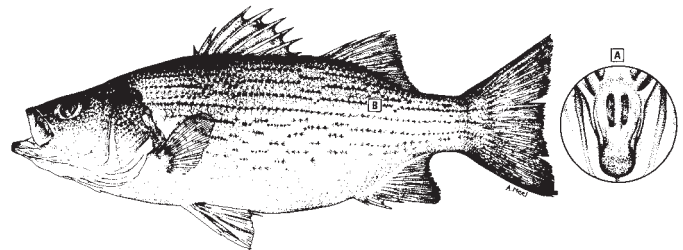
With true basses, the dorsal fin is clearly double, separated into spiny- and soft-rayed portions. White bass are common in many big reservoirs throughout Texas. Hybrid striped bass (hybrids) are stocked because of their quick growth and good survival characteristics. Populations of hybrids must be maintained by stocking. Hybrids produced at Texas state fish hatcheries are a cross between a female striped bass and a white bass male. The state record hybrid is 19.66 pounds, and the state record white bass is 5.56 pounds.

White bass are early-spring spawners. Schools of males move into spawning areas as much as a month before females. There is no nest preparation. Spawning occurs either near the surface, or in midwater, in running water or windswept banks with a gravel or rock substrate. Large females sometimes release nearly a million eggs during the spawning season. Released eggs sink and attach to the bottom, hatching in two to three days. Fry grow rapidly, feeding on small invertebrates. Hybrids go through the same spawning rituals as white bass but seldom produce viable offspring. Hybrids are stocked regularly in Fort Phantom Hill Reservoir and Proctor Reservoir. Other area reservoirs with hybrids are Coleman and Graham. Gizzard shad and threadfin shad are preferred food items for white bass and hybrids.

White Bass/Hybrid Striped Bass Identification

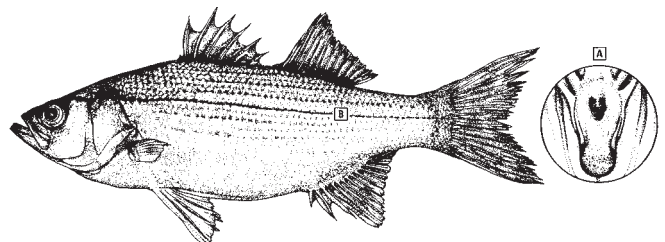
Hybrid Striped Bass

- A. Has two, distinct tooth patches near the middle towards the back of the tongue.
- B. Stripes distinct, usually broken, several extend to tail.



White Bass

- A. Has one tooth patch near the midline towards the back of the tongue.
- B. Stripes faint, only one extends to tail.



Big Country Fishes



Threadfin Shad



Gizzard Shad

Threadfin Shad and Gizzard Shad

Threadfin shad are usually distinguished from gizzard shad by the fact that the upper jaw does not project beyond the lower jaw. All fins on a threadfin shad have a yellow tint except the dorsal. In threadfin shad, unlike gizzard shad, the chin and floor of the mouth is speckled with black pigment. Threadfin shad are quite temperature sensitive, with die-offs reported at temperatures below 45°F. Spawning begins in the spring when water temperatures reach approximately 70°F, and may continue into the summer. Adhesive eggs attach to submerged objects and hatch in about four days. Shad are most often found in large schools. Young shad feed on microscopic animals and plants, as well as small insect larvae. Adults feed by filtering small food items from the water. Threadfin shad rarely exceed six inches in length, while gizzard shad can grow to a considerably larger size, up to 20 inches long. The Texas record (taken with a spear gun) weighed 2.97 pounds. Shad provide forage for most game species and are often used as bait.



Channel Catfish



Blue Catfish
Photo courtesy of
USFWS/Duane Raver

Channel Catfish and Blue Catfish

Channel catfish and blue catfish are easily distinguished from other catfish in Texas by their deeply forked tail fin. Typically, channel catfish have numerous small black spots that may be obscured in large adults. The anal fin has 24-29 soft rays, while the blue catfish has 30 or more rays in the anal fin. Channel catfish in excess of 36 pounds have been landed in Texas waters. Channel catfish spawn in late spring or early summer when water temperatures reach 75°F. Males select nest sites in dark secluded areas such as cavities in drift piles, logs, undercut banks, rocks, cans, etc. Males guard the nest. The eggs typically hatch in about a week. Fry remain in the nest for another week. In clear water, young fish appear to be much more susceptible to predation, and survival rates during the first year of life are much lower. Channel catfish less than four inches in length feed primarily on small insects. Adults are largely omnivorous, feeding on insects, mollusks, crustaceans, fish and even some plant material.

The blue catfish is the largest freshwater sportfish in Texas. The Texas record blue catfish of 121 pounds was caught by rod and reel at Lake Texoma in January of 2004. Their spawning behavior is similar to that of channel catfish. Like channel catfish, blue catfish pursue a varied diet, but they tend to eat fish earlier in life. It is reported that blue catfish exceeding 350 pounds were landed from the Mississippi River during the late 1800s.



Flathead Catfish

Flathead catfish can be pale yellow (hence the name “yellow cat”) to light brown on the back and sides, or highly mottled with black and/or brown (typically called “Opelousas”). The head is broadly flattened, with a projecting lower jaw. The tail fin is only slightly notched, not deeply forked as is the case with blue catfish and channel catfish. Specimens in excess of 110 pounds have been caught.

Flathead catfish may spawn from late May through August in Texas. Males construct nests by excavating a shallow depression in a natural cavity (a hollow log, cave or crevice) or near a large object. Over 100,000 eggs may be found in a golden-yellow egg mass, viciously guarded by the male. Young generally hatch in four to six days. Fry may school together for several days near the nest, but soon disperse and seek shelter under rocks or brush. Fingerlings feed on insect larvae, juveniles feed on small fish and crayfish, while adults feed almost exclusively on fish. Adults are usually solitary, each staking out a favorite spot, typically in deeper water or under cover.

Big Country Fishes



Freshwater Drum

Except for color, the freshwater drum (gaspergou) resembles its popular marine relative the red drum. The fish is deep-bodied and equipped with a long dorsal fin divided into two sections. Freshwater drum are silvery in color and lack the distinctive tail-fin spot of red drum. The Texas rod-and-reel record exceeds 30 pounds, and the trotline record is 55 pounds.

Freshwater drum may spawn in April or May in Texas. Spawning seems to occur in open water. The eggs float until they hatch. Freshwater drum spend most of their time at or near the bottom. They feed primarily on fish, crawfish and immature insects. Crawfish tails make excellent bait for catching freshwater drum.



Longnose Gar

Longnose gar are distinguished from other gar species found in Texas by the long snout whose length is at least ten times the minimum width. The longnose gar is one of three species of gar found in the Big Country. The others are spotted gar and shortnose gar. Despite widespread beliefs, **NO** alligator gar are present in the Big Country.

Spawning activity occurs as early as April. One or many males may accompany females, typically the larger sex. The adhesive eggs hatch in six to eight days. Fry feed primarily on insect larvae and small crustaceans such as water fleas. Fish appear in the diet very early. Longnose gar are typically associated with backwaters, and they do very well in man-made impoundments.



Smallmouth Buffalo

Smallmouth buffalo can sometimes be confused with common carp. However, buffalo lack the barbels of carp. Smallmouth buffalo have a distinctive sucker-type mouth, oriented downward. Rod-and-reel anglers have landed specimens in excess of 82 pounds, whereas the Texas trotline record is 97 pounds. Buffalo will sometimes take doughballs made with cottonseed meal. This species primarily feeds on the bottom, eating insect larvae, algae and detritus.



Common Carp

The common carp has barbels on either side of the upper jaw. Typically, color varies from brassy green or yellow to golden brown or even silvery. The dorsal fin and the anal fin both have a heavy-toothed spine. Individuals 12-25 inches in length and weighing up to 8-10 pounds are common, although they can grow much larger. Common carp may live in excess of 47 years. A growing number of anglers are becoming interested in carp as a sportfish. The Texas rod-and-reel record is currently 41.5 pounds. The North American record exceeds 57 pounds.

Angler Programs



Angler Recognition Program

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department recognizes fishing achievements through its Angler Recognition Program. The program keeps official state and water body records and issues certificates in recognition of other outstanding angler achievements. Complete details of the program are available on the TPWD web site at www.tpwd.state.tx.us. The Abilene Inland Fisheries District Office has the necessary application, certified scale and camera to certify angler recognition entries.



ShareLunker Program

The Toyota ShareLunker Program began November 26, 1986 when a 17.65-pound Lake Fork largemouth bass was caught by Mark Stevenson. Since then, over 500 largemouth bass have been donated from 61 public reservoirs and 21 private lakes. In the Big Country, ShareLunker fish have been caught from lakes Cisco, Clyde, O.H. Ivie, Trammell and Sweetwater. The program, which runs from October 1-April 30 each year, is a venture among businesses, state government and anglers to preserve and enhance Texas' largemouth bass fisheries.

Through the program, anglers loan largemouth bass weighing 13 pounds or more to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department for spawning and research purposes. At the end of spawning season, fish will be returned to the anglers for live release, or the angler may donate it permanently to the program. Superior genetics from ShareLunker females and their offspring will be used to improve the quality of largemouth bass stocked in Texas waters. In return for their cooperation, participating anglers receive a free fiberglass replica of their catch, Toyota ShareLunker clothing and recognition at the awards banquet at the Texas Freshwater Fisheries Center. In addition, the Texas resident catching the largest entry of the season will be awarded a lifetime fishing license.

Anyone catching a 13-pound-plus largemouth bass is eligible to participate by calling (903) 681-0550 weekdays or by paging (888) 784-0600 weekends and evenings.

Law Enforcement and Wildlife Offices

Contact your local law enforcement office for information regarding license fees, regulations, boat registration and boater education. These offices are open Monday through Friday during regular business hours. You can also report fish and game violations by calling Operation Game Thief at 1-800-792-GAME.

Law Enforcement

Abilene Office

281 North Willis
Abilene, Texas 79603
(325) 673-3333

Brownwood Office

301 Main
Brownwood, Texas 76801
(325) 646-0440

San Angelo Office

3407 South Chadbourne
San Angelo, Texas 76904
(325) 651-4844

Wildlife

Brownwood Regional Office

301 Main, Suite D
Brownwood, Texas 76801
(325) 643-5977

San Angelo Regional Office

3407-B South Chadbourne
San Angelo, Texas 76904
(325) 651-4748





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