

Fall 2014/Spring 2015 Pond Update

Fish Management

Ft. Stewart/HAAF, GA



Figure 1- Cory Priester caught this 13.1lbs bass from Pond 23 in March 2015

It's Spring!! Time to put away that camo, and pull out that fishing gear! Every fall, the Fort Stewart Fish and Wildlife Branch conducts a fall sport-fish population survey on the managed ponds. The information collected gives a general overview of how the population is doing, how healthy the individual fish are, how healthy the populations in each pond are, and whether or not a pond needs to be stocked or fish removed. From the information gathered we can provide tips to anglers for which ponds they should try next! Here is a quick overview so you will know where to go.



Figure 3- Bass from Pond 20 during the Fall 2014 sample



Figure 4- Bass from Pond 35 caught during the Fall 2014 sample



Figure 2- Bass caught from Pond 26 by Justin Voorhees in 2014

Bass Fishermen get ready!! If you are looking for that big bass, make sure you have a lure that resembles a shad in your tackle box! Ponds 1, 19, 20, 26, and 35 all have shad and big bass! Shad have been in ponds 19 and 20 for years, due to the ponds being so close to the river. The largest bass caught during our sampling in Fall 2014 was caught out of pond 19; the 21.7 inch bass weighed 11 pounds! Though not seen during the sample, multiple bass that weighed 5 pounds and more were caught in Pond 20 during 2014, including one that was 9.2 pounds! The biggest bass caught at Hunter was from Pond 35, which also has shad. This bass was 21.3 inches and weighed 6.7 pounds! Pond 26 (Metz Pond) has a very healthy population of both shad and golden shiners. At times you can see the bass schooling

the bait fish together. The high number of bait fish in this pond have allowed for some great sportfish populations, especially the bass. During the sample, only one legal bass was caught (remember, bass have to be 24 inches long to keep from Pond 26!!), but there were several that were close. The largest bass sampled in Pond 26 was 24.5 inches long and weighed 7.2 pounds. Threadfin shad were stocked in Pond 1 (Pineview Lake) in April 2014. During the 2013 sample, only 6 bass weighed just over 1 pound. In the Fall 2014 sample, there were half as many bass caught, but over 6 times as many over 1 pound, with some weighing in over 3 pounds! Hopefully as the shad population continues to grow, the bass population will continue to improve.



Figure 5 – Bass, 8.8lbs, caught from Pond 17 during the Fall 2014 sample.



Figure 6 – Bass caught in Holbrook Pond during a sampling demonstration, October 2014.



Figure 7 – Bass caught in Pond 10 during the Fall 2014 sample.

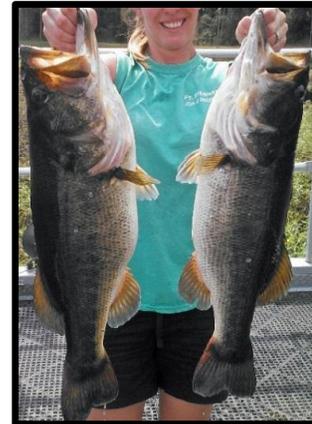


Figure 8 – Two large bass, 10.8lbs and 8.2lbs, found in Pond 28 during the Fall 2014 sample.

Bass Anglers may also want to check out ponds 3, 10, 17, and definitely 28! Between our fall sample and educational outreach demonstrations, Pond 3 (Holbrook Pond) was sampled several times in 2014. Each time, multiple large bass were seen. In the fall sample alone, 2 nearly identical bass, each weighing over 6 pounds were caught. The following week during an outreach event, another bass over 7 pounds was caught. Each time additional bass weighing over 3 pounds were also caught. Inside the cantonment area, Pond 10 might surprise some fishermen. Although there were no huge bass caught, there were multiple bass over 3 pounds in Pond 10 during the sample, and quite a few more that were over 1 pound. Definitely a good pond to hit if you just have a little time to fish. Pond 17 is back to full-pool and is recovering after nearly drying up during the drought, and the bass population is recovering with it. Although most of the bass were smaller, one bass was caught during the sample that was 24.7 inches long and weighed 8.8 pounds! And once again, Pond 28 had some of the largest bass caught during the Fall 2014 sample. One bass was 10.8 pounds and another was 8.2 pounds! Two great bass and they're still swimming around in Pond 28.



Figure 9 – Bream caught in Pond 17 during the Fall 2014 sample



Figure 10 – Justin Voorhees's son caught this bream from Pond 1 in 2014



Figure 11 – Bream and shellcracker caught in Pond 26 during the Fall 2014 sample

Bream fishermen, it's almost time to get your gear out as well, and get to your favorite fishing hole! If you are looking for a new spot to catch bream (bluegill sunfish), check out ponds 1, 2, 17, 26, and 28. With the addition of shad and bluegill/redear fingerlings to Pond 1 (Pineview Lake), the bream

population has grown in the past year. Although the number of bream per acre is still low, it is definitely rising. And the sizes of bream have increased. Almost one-third of the bream caught were over 7 inches long; the largest bream caught was 10.3 inches long and weighed 0.8 pounds. In fact, ponds 1, 2, and 26 each had bream over 10 inches long! Ponds 17 and 28 each had many bream over 9 inches long. The least likely ponds to catch nice bream are ponds 10, 24, 30 and 31. All of the bream caught in ponds 10, 30, and 31 were all under 7 inches long and there were no bream at all caught in Pond 24 at Hunter during the fall sample.



Figure 12 – Large shellcracker (Redear sunfish) caught from Pond 2 during the Fall 2014 sample.



Figure 13 – Shellcracker caught from Pond 1 during a Spring sample in 2015

There were not nearly as many shellcrackers (redear sunfish) as there were bream, but we definitely caught some nice ones! Ponds 1, 2, 17, 26, and 28 all had multiple shellcrackers over 9 inches long and over $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound! The largest one we saw, 11.8 inches and weighing 1.1 pounds, was in Metz Pond. There were 4 in this pond that weighed over 1 pound! Although there weren't many found, these are some nice fish!



Figure 14 – Crappie weighing in excess of 2lbs were caught in Pond 26 during the Fall 2014 sample.

Crappie, also known as white perch, were found in about half of the ponds on FS/HAAF. In almost all of these ponds, there were crappie over 10 inches long! A couple that really stood out were ponds 3, 19, 20, and 26. We saw 7 crappie in Pond 3, each over 10 inches. Pond 19 only had 3 over 10 inches, but one of them was 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds! We only saw 2 in Pond 20, but they were both over 13 inches long and weighed about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds each. Almost all of the crappie caught in Metz during the sample were over 11 inches and 1 pound, the largest being over 15 inches and weighing 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds! Although they were not seen this fall, large crappie are usually found in Pond 1 (Pineview) as well.

Catfish can be found in all of the ponds and rivers on FS/HAAF. But if you are going in search of catfish, try ponds 3, 24, or 30. These are the ponds that are used annually for Kids Fishing Events. Prior to each event, channel catfish are stocked to help ensure a successful fishing event for the kids, and many survive the event and continue to thrive.

And don't forget about the rivers and creeks found across Fort Stewart! The Canoochee River runs through the Installation and has a variety of fishing habitats. There are multiple landings and access points to find just the fishing spot that suits you. This river is known for its great redbreast sunfish populations. Large bass and catfish are also regularly caught out of these waters. The Ogeechee River runs along the north-east border of the Installation, and there are only a handful of landings/access points on the Ft Stewart portion of



Figures 15 and 16 – Chance DeLoach caught these redbreast in the Canoochee River May 2014.

this river. There are also miles and miles of streams and creeks to wet a line in.

Ponds 36 and 37 have recently opened for fishing in the 4th BCT area. Although fall sampling was not done in these two ponds, we have been receiving some great fishing reports! Anglers are catching some big bass here with multiple reports of 5 pounds and up!

Water levels have risen and Pond 34 is open again for fishing! This pond is not being maintained as a managed pond, so be careful as you fish here. The vegetation is thick, providing great hiding spots for alligators, snakes, stumps, and holes. But fishing is once again allowed and great reports are coming from this pond as well.

Pond 29 at Hunter has been closed for fishing since 2009 due to dam reconstruction and drought. The water has risen here as well and fish have been stocked. Pond 29 will be open again for fishing May 1, but it will be catch and release only.

So, no matter what you are fishing for this spring, Ft Stewart/Hunter Army Airfield has a spot for you!
Happy Fishing!!



Figure 17 – Ernest Cypress caught this 7lb 8oz bass from Pond 34 in March 2015