

Winter 2016 News Letter



It's been too long since we got out a Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management news letter. We have been very busy electrofishing, collecting water chemistry data, writing reports, installing feeders, aeration systems/fountains, fish attractors and spraying nuisance vegetation. That's a great thing! I apologize for not being more adamant to get these out, as several of you have been asking about when the next one was coming. We have several things we wanted to make you aware of that we have been or are getting involved in.

The company's Ninth Anniversary is upon us March 1st. We started with one client in south central Georgia with a couple ponds and have grown out into all southeast from Texas, to Florida up to North Carolina. Our clients range from ornamental ponds in yards to private lakes over 3,000 acres. We want to thank all our terrific clients and friends for referring us to their friends and colleagues with such high praises, which is the number one reason for our continued growth and success.

In 2015 Scott continued to write articles for Wildlife Trends Journal, continued on the Outdoors Show radio show from Jacksonville, Florida, was an occasional guest on the Cast & Blast radio show from Montgomery, Alabama, and had a few lake management articles in the Montgomery Advertiser along with columnist and Cast & Blast radio show host Steve Long. We recommend any time you have the opportunity read or listen on air or internet to these media outlets as they are all entertaining and very informative. Links to all of them can be found on our website or Facebook page.

Pond Management – Stocking and Hatcheries

This time of year lake owners are thinking about stocking for a new lake, or to add or replenish a species (usually forage) that was depleted from predation, lost to a harsh winter, or more recently – flooding. RARELY will you need to stock more largemouth bass. These fish are usually too plentiful and lack of forage is the problem, not lack of bass numbers. There are many different kinds of forage to stock in spring. Species such as bluegill, threadfin shad, golden shiners, minnows (fathead minnows or mosquitofish), and tilapia are all common spring forage species stocked in late winter or spring. Tilapia will die off during winter (except in the extreme south) so this species needs to be stocked annually. Also check your individual state's regulations, as not all fish listed are legal in every state. Another forage species is the crawfish. For crawfish to be successful at reproducing, they need lots of underwater cover such as thick grass, logs or boulders to hide under. Non-forage species that can be stocked are grass carp, channel catfish and Morone bass hybrid (sunshine or palmetto bass). None of these fish reproduce, so as they die off or get harvested, they need to be restocked. We recommend staying with native species to your area and trying to use hatcheries that produce their fish near your lake. These fish are usually better acclimated to your type of climate. This is not always possible, but survival is generally higher from local fish genetics.



It is recommended to pre order fish from hatchery, so they have you down and can bring them as they become available. Hatcheries can either rear their own or they get their fish from somewhere else and bring to you as they receive them. Fish sometimes are wild and sometimes born at a hatchery. For example, many suppliers of threadfin shad get their wild caught threadfins from states like Arkansas, Oklahoma or Texas. If the wild stocks are low, not many people will get their threadfin shad request that year. In either case, the hatchery will bring the fish as they become available since most do not keep fish over winter, unless they absolutely have to. Depending where they get their fish from, depends on when you can expect to get them in your waters. In the hotter climates, it is not advisable to have fish delivered in summer to minimize hauling and stocking stress.

Tempering the fish prior to stocking is necessary to reduce mortality no matter what the species.

When working with hatcheries, ask questions. Are the fish spawned on site or brought in from somewhere else? Be specific on what you want, the number and size.

If you order four inch bluegill and they arrive averaging two inches, point it out and renegotiate the price, or refuse delivery. Get a scoop of fish in a bucket with water and randomly measure 10-20 of them before they are stocked. If they are all or mostly considerably short, then you need to decide what to do next. Many clients are concerned if they get the number they ordered. This one is tougher to check, but it can be done. Usually you take the hatchery's word. Inquiring how many individuals per pound and how many total pounds are being delivered helps. The only way to check 100% is to weigh all the fish stocked between truck and lake, and then calculate if that number is what you ordered. If you ordered 10,000 fish and they were 500 per pound, then you should receive 20 lbs of fish. When looking for a hatchery, ask your Lake Manager or neighbors to recommend someone who they recently used and like. Unless it's a hatchery you have a long standing relationship with, meet the truck at the lake and look at the fish. When they hit the water were they lively and immediately swam away, or did they come out lethargic and stay around the stock site in shallow water for a long time. Did you see a lot of bellies (dead ones) when they were stocked? A day or two afterwards, walk the shoreline and look for floaters (dead ones). This brief survey gives a sense of post stocking survival rates. If it is an existing fish population and there are predators present, do not stock small fish at the bare beach site, try to stock near habitat (vegetation or woody structure) to reduce instant predation.

Fish are loaded onto trucks or trailers equipped with aeration and usually bottled oxygen. The water is also salted. As freshwater



Here is a typical raceway where fish are usually temporarily stored before loaded into a tank or in bags and shipped to their final destination for stocking. (Photo taken at Florida's Largemouth Bass Conservation Center)

fish become stressed, they flush the needed salts out of their body through osmosis. When hauling freshwater fish, adding salt to the tanks is recommended and when hauling saltwater fish, diluting the saltwater is recommended as they do the opposite and receive a salt overload when stressed by bringing in more salt than their body can handle. Fish become stressed when placed into crowded hauling tanks. The number of fish that can be safely hauled at one time is based on species, quality of hauling equipment, air and water temperatures, and the size of individuals being hauled. This is why better hatcheries only haul certain species during certain times of the year. Hauling a load of threadfin shad several hundred miles in mid August is generally not done because the water heats from the air and the destination water temperature may also be too warm. The fish may not be alive when they reach their destination or they may perish shortly after stocking due to excessive heat of lake water. Some species are more resilient to stress or environmental changes than others. Hauling distance can also dictate when what species can be stocked. Hauling fish 10 miles compared to 300 miles is a big difference on how long the fish will be in the tanks. Fish can also be bagged up and hauled or shipped. Usually the oxygen in fish bags can last up to 48 hours depending on air temperature, how many fish per bag and how big the individuals are. This is usually done with fry, but can also be done with fingerlings and even young adults of some species if the trip is short.



Here is a fat largemouth bass and its primary forage in this Southwest Georgia lake. That forage and growth will generate some quality fish in a short time, but the forage needs to remain constant.

Once the hatchery truck arrives to your site (or the fish bags are delivered), the fish should be tempered prior to stocking. This is when you compare the tank water chemistry to the lake water chemistry parameters such as water temperature, Dissolved Oxygen (DO) and pH and gradually change th tank water to mimic the lake water. They can check for more, but these are the bare minimum. Tempering should be performed by slowly running water into the tank allowing it to sheet flow out top or slowly through valve on bottom of tank. With bags, first submerge them closed and let the temperatures equalize and then gradually allow water to seep in to equalize the other mentioned parameters if they are not close. Once the three mentioned parameters are close in the tank and lake, the fish can be stocked. Tempering is routinely skipped, but it reduces shock and mortality of fish during and post stocking. If the water in the tank is 68° F and the water in the lake is 82° F, there will be stress and unnecessary mortality. When stocking fish from cooler temperatures to warmer there is more stress than warmer temperatures in tank to cooler temperatures in lake. A large difference such as basic pH (8) to acidic (less than 6) can also cause stress or mortality. The DO is not as important and rarely an issue, but if the DO is extremely low in the lake (below 3.0 milligrams/liter) then postponing the stocking may be an option apposed to possibly loosing most or all the fish post stocking.

Short Notes

Spring is our busiest time of year, so setting up spring work now is advised. Depending where your property is located, determines when we will electrofish, if that is being requested. Starting in Central Florida, we begin electrofishing in early March, and usually finish the spring sampling season in North Carolina by mid May. Lake evaluations, installing feeders, aeration/fountains, fish attractors, vegetation planting or spraying and stocking are our usual springtime work activities. We recently have added equipment to spray herbicides from lake shore at housing communities and golf courses in South Georgia and North Florida. If your development or golf course is in need for such service where boat access is not feasible, but a UTV around the shoreline is, please contact us and we would love to work with them keeping the urban lakes looking good, while still functioning as designed to handle run-off and filter water before entering a natural system.

We want to remind everyone of the Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management Lunker Fish & Bruiser Buck Clubs. A commemorative plaque will be presented to landowners who experience an exceptional fish being caught from their waterbodies or a whitetail deer harvested from their land that we manage on a regular basis. The landowner need not be the successful angler or hunter, but we do need a quality photo, name of angler or hunter, date and time caught or harvested, total length, girth and weight of the fish or antler measurements of the deer. Please check our web site for more details:

http://southernsportsmanaquaticsandland.com/lunker_fish_and_bruiser_buck_club.

Please forward these newsletters to friends and colleagues or direct them to our web site where all previous Quarterly News Letters and links of interest can be found:

<http://www.southernsportsmanaquaticsandland.com>. Also please follow us on Facebook, where Steve and I post what we are doing in the field with lots of photos of various aspects of work, hunting and fishing trips, nature and client success stories. Two new features we are starting on Facebook are the Management Minute, where we will do short 60 second videos on "how to" in the lake and land management industry. The other will be new videos shot in the field with our Go Pro camera. We hope to collect some great electrofishing footage, fish attractor footage and anything else we think our viewers would find interesting.

If you are pleased with the services and products you receive from Southern Sportsman Aquatics & Land Management, please tell your friends and associates about us. The best compliment you can give us is a referral. We are always looking for additional clients from Texas to Florida and into the Carolinas.

Scott G. Brown, Owner



Check us out on the web!



southernsportsmanaquaticsandland.com