



Raver US FWS



Fish Stocking ?

Checking on fish reproduction by summer seining



A well balanced fish population has a range of fish sizes and ages.



Stocking striped bass hybrid fingerlings at Lums Pond.



For more information on fish stocking contact:

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What is the first question that most anglers ask? “When was this pond/river/creek stocked last?” Historically, most anglers kept their catch and there was a greater need to maintain fish populations through stocking. However, with the widespread popularity of catch and release, stocking is not usually necessary except for specific reasons.

When is stocking needed and how do you know? One method that Division biologists use to sample Delaware’s freshwater fish populations is an electrofishing boat. The fish collected are measured, weighed, and counted. Scale samples (see *Age and Growth* flyer) are taken to determine ages and growth patterns. If low numbers of juvenile fish, particularly largemouth bass and bluegill, are noted, a seine survey will be scheduled. This involves using a beach seine to sample young-of-year (less than 1 year old) fish between July and September. Supplemental stocking may be scheduled if there is poor reproduction in a pond as has happened recently in Millsboro Pond, where natural reproduction was supplemented with stocked bass.

This is also the case in some of our freshwater tidal streams such as the Nanticoke and Broadkill Rivers. There, poor reproduction is fairly common due to the negative impact of tidal currents and heavy silt loads on nest-builders such as largemouth bass. Bass fingerlings are stocked annually. Adult bass are collected from the Nanticoke and allowed to naturally reproduce in small ponds at a hatchery. The resulting fingerlings are collected and stocked into the rivers.

The other most common reason for fish stocking is due to a catastrophic event such as a dam wash-out or emergency water level drawdown such as at Hearn's Pond and Griffith Lake. In both ponds, a variety of fish species were stocked to provide both gamefish and forage species.

Some species do not reproduce and must be stocked to maintain a population. This is the case with striped bass hybrids which are stocked each fall into Lums Pond to provide an additional gamefish for the angling public in a heavily fished pond.

So, the next time you want to ask about when fish were last stocked, ask instead, if the fish population is balanced and the habitat suitable. If those answers are yes, there is normally no need for stocking due to the tremendous potential of natural reproduction.



Striped bass hybrid taken from Lums Pond where the population is maintained by stocking.