

Lakes

Fish puts 'sunshine' into fishermen's lives

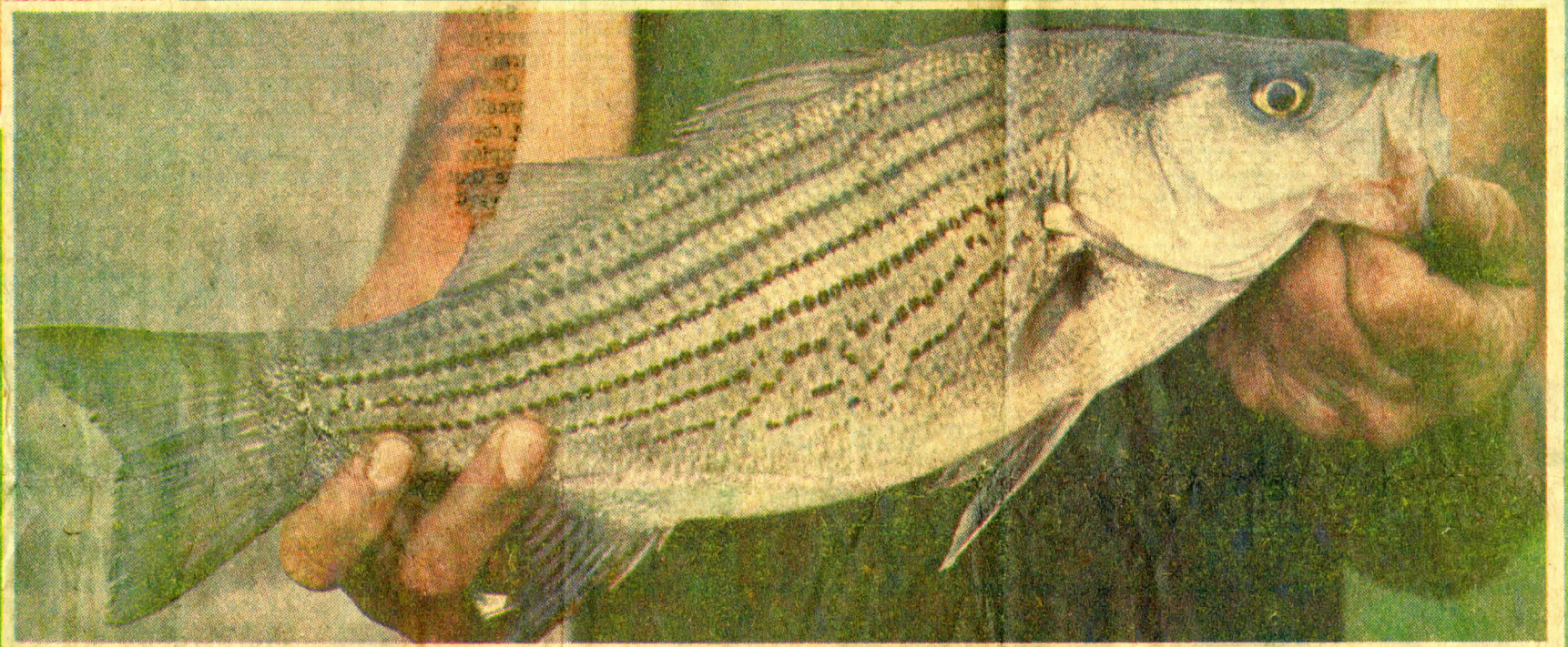
Sentinel Star

Orlando, Florida

Wednesday, May 17, 1978



Hands offer a point of comparison for a sunshine bass being released in the Winter Park chain of lakes, above, and one taken out of the lake after two years, right



Red Huber/Sentinel Star

By CHARLIE HARRIS
Outdoors Writer

One recent mid-morning, a fisheries transport truck of the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission backed up to the boat ramp at Dinky Dock Marina on Lake Virginia of the Winter Park chain of lakes.

Inside the serated tank were almost 11,000 tiny fish which would be gently released there and at two other sites on the chain, Lakes Minnehaha and Maitland.

They were known as "sunshine bass," Florida's newest game fish. The hybrids are a cross between white bass and striped

bass. They were born only a few weeks earlier at the commission's Richloam fish hatchery in Withlacoochee State Forest.

Sunshine bass are not new to the Winter Park chain. Some were stocked there in experiments a couple of years ago and those that survived now average between two and three pounds each. Sunshine bass have fared well in the chain and commission biologist Jon Buntz said a random net sampling produced as many as 75 to 100 of the "catchable" size hybrids in one haul.

Even as the biologists and their aides carefully dipped the sunshine bass fry from the tank and transferred them to the lake,

local fishing guide Bob Forrester caught one of the larger fish which had been stocked there previously.

Lake Howell received 4,060 new sunshine bass fry to boost earlier stockings and Lake Lotta, on State Road 50 west of Orlando, received an additional 200.

The sunshine bass program actually grew out of the original commission experiment with striped bass. Reproduction from landlocked Santee Cooper stripers which had already adapted to fresh water was stocked in selected waters in an experiment to achieve greater control of gizzard and threadfin shad. That experiment was only

partly successful. The survival rate for stocked stripers was less than desirable on an average. Their growth rate was fairly slow, requiring well over a year to reach harvestable legal size of 15 inches in length.

The stripers did feed about as well as expected on shad but they also fed just as readily on bass fingerlings and other game fish fry at the same time. Their appeal as a game fish was moderately successful.

(over)