



Biology

Hybrid Striped Bass, commonly called hybrids, are a man-made cross between a Striped Bass and White Bass. In the Harris Chain they are a fast-growing fish, especially in their first two years of life. Hybrids can reach up to 14" at 1 year old and 18" by 2 years old.

Hybrids in Florida lakes are not able to spawn naturally due to flow requirements of fertilized eggs. Therefore, all hybrids caught are a result of FWC stocking efforts.

Past studies show hybrids likely only live 5-6 years and have a high natural mortality due to high summer water temperatures. During the summer months hybrids will seek out cool water areas (e.g., springs) or flowing water to alleviate stressful conditions.

Hybrids are voracious feeders and consume small fish including threadfin and gizzard shad. Young fish also feed on zooplankton and invertebrates. Hybrids travel and feed in schools with peak activity in early morning or evening.

Some anglers are concerned hybrids will compete for forage with bass and crappie. However, studies have shown that the introduction of hybrids have little to no negative effects to existing sport fish populations.



The FWC's Big Catch Program is an angler recognition program that highlights the various freshwater fish species found in Florida. To qualify for the Big Catch program, anglers need to catch and document a sunshine bass exceeding one of the following length or weight:

Adult Category: 20" or 5.00 lbs.

Youth (under 16) Category: 15" or 3.50 lbs.

Florida's state record: 16.31 lbs.

To submit catches visit:

<https://www.bigcatchflorida.com/>



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Hybrid Striped Bass in the Harris Chain



An overview of the stocking program, fishery, and angling tips.



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
MyFWC.com

FWC's Stocking Program

Hybrids have been stocked in Florida since 1974. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) stocks around 1 million hybrids per year in lakes and rivers throughout the state of Florida. Hybrids are stocked to provide an additional sport fish option for anglers and are known for their hard fighting ability and as good table fare.

Creating a Fishery

To create this fishery FWC biologists collect and transport adult striped bass and white bass from the Panhandle to the Blackwater State Fish Hatchery in Holt.



Once at the hatchery, biologists hand strip ripe eggs from adult females and fertilize these eggs with milt (sperm) from adult males. Fertilized eggs hatch in about 2 days producing Hybrid Striped Bass hatchlings called fry. Fry are grown-out in hatchery ponds at Blackwater and Richloam State Fish Hatchery in Webster, FL until reaching 1-2 inches in size. These fish, called fingerlings, are then stocked into lakes and rivers statewide.



Stocking

Over the last 3 years (2017–2019), FWC has stocked over 900,000 hybrids in the Harris Chain of Lakes.

For more information regarding FWC stocking, please visit: myfwc.com/fishing/freshwater/stocking/

Lakes	2017	2018	2019
Apopka	102,600		
Harris	212,568	219,243	159,212
Eustis		111,144	101,760

Questions? Email us at: HarrisChain@myfwc.com

Recent Research

In 2017, FWC biologists conducted a statewide angler survey on hybrids. The goal of the survey was to assess the utilization, awareness, and attitudes towards hybrid fisheries across the state of Florida, including the Harris Chain, to better inform hybrid management in future years. The study resulted in anglers identifying they enjoy catching hybrids because they are hard-fighting and would target them more if they better knew how to catch them. FWC is committed in helping anglers learn about and enjoy this amazing fishery.

Current Regulation

In the Harris Chain, there is no minimum size limit and a 20 fish daily bag limit.



"Everyone, young and old, loves catching the hard fighters; thanks, FWC, for stocking these wonderful-tasting fish."

—Steve, avid Hybrid Angler

Fishing Tips

In the Harris Chain, FWC currently stocks Lakes Harris and Eustis. The best time to target hybrids is generally around dawn and dusk when they tend to most actively feed. Popular baits include small lipless crankbaits (e.g., rattle traps), spoons (e.g., little cleo's) or small swimbaits. Anglers can also try live bait including small shiners or shrimp. In Lake Harris, try targeting deep depth contours or near the springs. In Lake Eustis, try the mouth of the Dora Canal or Dead River; hybrids are attracted to flowing water, try these areas especially after rain events when water is flowing out of these canals.

