

OU zoology professor Loren Hill is living every angler's dream: He is paid to fish.

As director of OU's Biological Station at Lake Texoma, Hill is free to pursue his first love, ichthyology, the study of fishes, a field in which he is gaining a national reputation.

Back on the Norman campus, however, Hill has devoted most of the past four years to the chairmanship of the zoology department. His desire to build and promote the biological station has caused him to resign his departmental post, effective September 1.

"I have had an opportunity to contact some people who are influential and financially able to help me bring in some large private money for the biological station and develop it into the program of national stature that I think it has the potential to become," Hill explains. "It is really a diamond in the rough."

Hill is uniquely qualified to evaluate the station, since he has been on its staff since 1966 and director since 1969. A Texas native, he received his B.S. from West Texas State, M.S. from the University of Arkansas and completed his Ph.D. at the University of Louisville. For a year, he taught beginning zoology at the all-girl Catherine Spalding College in Louisville, where the faculty consisted of Hill and three nuns. When the OU offer came, he didn't tarry.

When he returns to the biological station full time, Hill will be working on a grant from the National Bass Research Foundation to investigate competition between largemouth and striped bass in reservoirs. The six-year project will bring in from \$40,000 to \$70,000 annually.

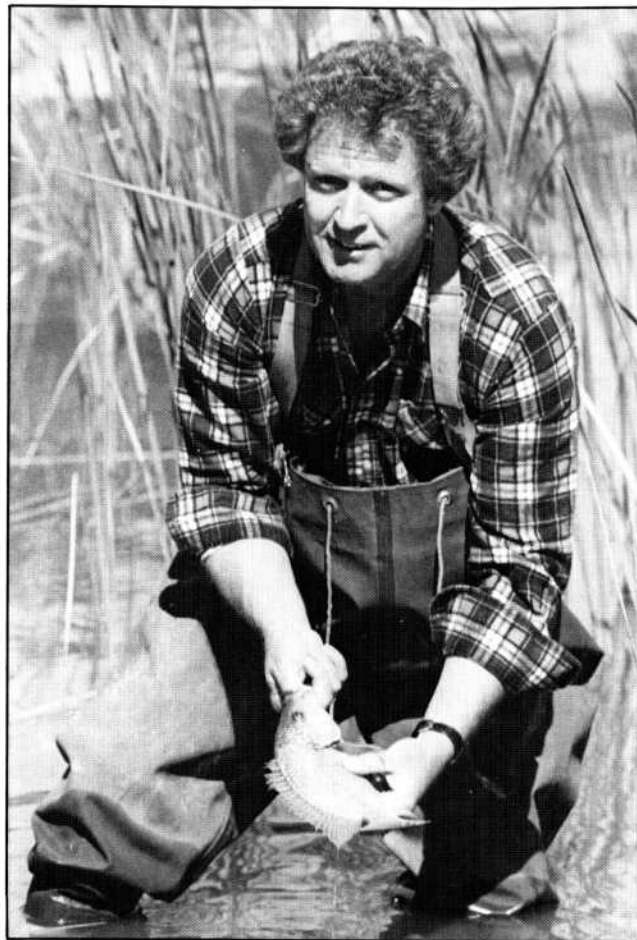
"Within the last 10-to-12 years," Hill says, "striped bass introduced from the East Coast have provided a tremendous fishery, but there also have been some biological problems. The bass foundation wants to know if the striped could eliminate the forage, or food base, for the largemouth bass, which is probably the number one game fish for anglers."

Hill will attempt to answer that question by studying, among other things, the growth and feeding habits of both varieties of bass at Texoma and locations in Louisiana. "This is my main love, absolutely," Hill says, "the research aspect of fisheries. I'll spend more and more time at Texoma in the next four to five years."

His fascination with research and his love of fishing led to a discovery that is being touted by the fishing world as an important aid to anglers. After studying light, temperature and oxygen conditions, Hill began correlating pH levels, or the acid base relationship of water, to the other factors and measuring their combined effect on fishing. After several years, he developed a meter to monitor pH and this unit is being widely used today.

In promoting the monitor, Hill has made personal and television appearances, and was interviewed by *Sports Illustrated*. He also has been invited to fishing sites all over the country by professionals Bill Dance, Roland Martin and Jimmy Houston, and he has been deluged by more than 300 letters of inquiry from fishermen nationwide.

Hill believes all this attention will help him promote the station, a facility destined for growth. Currently



In a test pond at OU's Fisheries Resource Center, Hill displays an African perch described as "aquatic chicken."

utilized by OU academic departments and individual students working in biological sciences, the station, which will accommodate 300, also is open to other groups for meetings and seminars. The last week in April, for instance, 270 eighth-graders from Norman's Whittier Middle School descended on the station for the third annual "School Out-of-Doors."

"The teachers recruit parents and friends to act as counselors," Hill says. "When you go down there at the beginning of the week, everything is 'great, fantastic.' Then go back about Thursday and those people can hardly walk, and the kids are running circles around them."

Hill's attitude and loyalties to OU remain undaunted by the recent financial and morale problems. "I've had opportunities to go other places, as many people have, but there's a tremendous future here at the University of Oklahoma. I'm totally dedicated to the University; I like the people and the area, and I'm going to remain here as long as I can do a good job."

"I've been accused of being a person with a position rather than a job," Hill admits with a smile. "At heart I'm a fisherman, but I'm also a zoologist. To have my research directly related to my fishing is the greatest thing in the world for me."