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Do you know if your bass/bream pond is balanced? That is, does your pond have the proper ratio of predators to prey, thus maintaining the system's health. Bass/bream ponds should start with a 1:10 ratio of bass to bluegill. Balanced ratios of fish provide enough food for the bass, while allowing enough bluegill to survive to reproduce. Over time, through fishing pressure (or lack there of) and predation, a pond can fall out of balance, resulting in reduced fishing quality.

How do you determine if your pond is in balance? An effective method of testing the balance of a pond is through short seine hauls along the shore. After each seine haul, record the number of bass and bream captured in each category (<3 inches, 3-5 inches, and >5 inches). Repeat the seining in several different areas along the shore.

By combining what you learn from the seining, and the recent fishing results, you can determine the status of your pond's balance. Typically, if a pond is out of balance, it is categorized as bluegill crowded, bass crowded, or wild fish crowded.

Bluegill crowded ponds will show many 3-5 inch bluegill and few juvenile bass in the seine. Additionally, fishing in the pond will yield small bluegill, and few to no bass of a harvestable size. Bass crowded ponds will show many bluegill less than 3 inches in the

seine. Angling in the pond will yield skinny bass, and a small number of large bluegill. If you find your seine full of unwanted fish, it may be a sign of being dominated by wild fish.

In each case, steps can be taken to bring your pond back into balance, which will lead to an improved fishing experience. For help evaluating the seine results, and the suggested remedies of unbalanced ponds, contact your local fisheries extension agent.

For additional questions or information, contact P.J. Waters, Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center, 438-5690.