



## **Bear Creek Lake 2009**

Bear Creek Lake is a 40-acre impoundment owned and operated by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation with fisheries management responsibilities handled by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF). The lake is the focal point of the 326-acre Bear Creek Lake State Park and is located in the Cumberland State Forest. There is one boat ramp providing angler access to the lake as well as a series of trails that provide extensive bank fishing opportunities. Bear Creek Lake provides warmwater fisheries for largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, warmouth, channel catfish, and black crappie. Gizzard shad are also present in the lake and provide additional prey for largemouth bass.

Bear Creek Lake has become a very good largemouth bass fishery in the last decade since renovation of the lake in 1999. The 2008 warmwater fishery survey showed an excellent size distribution of bass with all sizes well represented and fish up to 23 inches sampled. The fishery continues to improve with more large fish in the population each year and density just slightly below average for a Piedmont lake. 2008 was an average spawn for Bear Creek so anglers should have good luck with the largemouth bass fishing for years to come. In an effort to protect this ever-improving bass fishery, the VDGIF with support from the State Park will implement a size and creel limit restriction of 15 inches and 2 bass per day. This will help protect the breeding population and encourage continued good growth and quality bass fishing for the future. This regulation was imposed on 1 January 2009.

The sunfish fishery at Bear Creek Lake was dominated by small fish in 2008. Bluegill numbers are very high but no fish sampled were greater than 8 inches. The bulk of fish sampled were 4-5 inches, which is good for largemouth bass to prey upon but not very exciting for anglers. Redear sunfish were not much better but fish up to 8 inches were sampled this past spring. This is not unusual for Bear Creek Lake and not unusual for a small impoundment with both gizzard shad and crappie; both species that compete for resources with sunfish, especially in their early life stages. So, expect lots of success fishing for sunfish at Bear Creek Lake but don't expect to catch a lot of big bream here.

Bear Creek Lake is an excellent destination for bass anglers and a great place to take kids fishing. Interpretive trails surround the lake and bank access is excellent at the Park. Fishing habitat is abundant in the lake and anglers can expect to have a great day of fishing or enjoying any of the myriad of other opportunities at the Park. Bear Creek Lake is restricted to electric motor or paddle only to enhance all visitors' enjoyment of this beautiful Park. To visit Bear Creek Lake State Park, follow route 60 west from Midlothian to state route 622 (Trents Mill Rd). Travel north on 622 until you reach state route 629 on the left. This will take you into the park where signs are posted to assist visitors in locating all facilities.