



Three Lakes Park 2010

Three Lakes Park, located on Wilkinson Road, one mile east of Rt. 301, is owned and operated by Henrico County. As the name states, the park contains three lakes, two of which are open to fishing. The two fishing lakes are approximately 7 acres (Lake #1) and 5 acres (Lake #3) in size, and are actually old borrow pits dug during the construction of I-64. The middle lake (Lake #2) has a nature center with a large aquarium embedded in the shoreline, and it is closed to fishing. No boats are allowed, but most areas of the largest fishing lake (Lake #1) can be accessed along the shoreline, at the picnic pavilion, or from the fishing pier.

Lake #1 is immediately on the left after entering the parking lot; just walk past the gate and follow the hard path to the lake on the left. Lake #1 is incorporated into the Department's Community Lakes Improvement Program (CLIP) and receives annual stockings of harvestable-sized channel catfish. Fish attractors have been placed at two locations in Lake #1 to enhance angling opportunities. Lake #3 is not accessible to our sampling gear, and therefore, we have no information regarding the status of the fish community.

In August of 2009, the fish community of Lake #1 was sampled by boat electrofishing. A total of eight species were collected with gizzard shad and bluegill being by far the most abundant species collected (Table 1). The most prevalent predator species collected was largemouth bass, which exhibited a lower than expected catch rate. The largemouth bass fishery is very limited at the fishing lake, with only 19 bass were collected during the survey. Although the bass population is limited, 79% of the bass collected were at least 8 inches, with a good proportion of these fish (40%) measuring at least 15 inches. Bass ranged in size from 3 to 20 inches (Figure 1). Overall bass captured were in very plump and in excellent condition. Bass reproduction is good but many of these fish are not making it to the adult population. Because of the limited adult bass population and low recruitment, the bass population in Lake #1 is regulated under a minimum size limit of 18 inches with a harvest limit of one bass per day. Although there are some quality-sized bass in the lake fishing pressure makes these larger fish tough to catch.

Sunfish (bluegill and redear) were not as abundant as expected and all sunfish collected were small individuals (< 7 inches). A number of black crappie were collected and all but two crappie collected were small individuals (<8 inches). Surprisingly, two crappie collected were very large individuals (13 and 14 inches). The abundant gizzard shad could be limiting the juvenile panfish populations (bluegill, redear, and black crappie), due to potential competition for food resources. Another potential detriment to the panfish populations are the presence of common carp in Lake #1. The lake remains somewhat turbid and unfortunately this could be due to the carp. The suspended materials created by the carp could negatively affect the spawning success of panfish species.

One unique attribute of Lake #1 is the presence of bowfin in the lake. A small number of bowfin were collected (N = 2) and they were large fish measuring 21 and 24 inches. Even though small numbers of bowfin were collected, many more bowfin were spotted in the survey

that avoided capture. These feisty predator species will actively take lures and live baits and add a diversified fishery for anglers. Anglers can catch bowfin on the same lures used to catch largemouth bass or they can be captured on live minnows.

Finally, no channel catfish were collected during this sample, but the lake was not scheduled to be stocked until later in the summer. Many of the catfish stocked in the previous years were most likely caught and harvested by anglers. Additionally, catfish often frequent deeper water making them more difficult to catch with electrofishing gear. Channel catfish continue to be stocked annually at high rates, so anglers always have a good chance of catching a few.

For more information on Three Lakes Park, please contact:

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Species	Number Collected	CPUE (fish/hour)	Percentage of catch
Black Crappie	21	29	10.1
Bluegill	62	87	29.8
Bowfin	2	3	1.0
Common Carp	17	24	8.2
Gizzard Shad	77	108	37.0
Golden Shiner	7	10	3.4
Largemouth Bass	19	27	9.1
Redear	3	4	1.4

Table 1. Species account and catch rates for fish collected throughout lake #1 at Three Lakes Park in 2009.

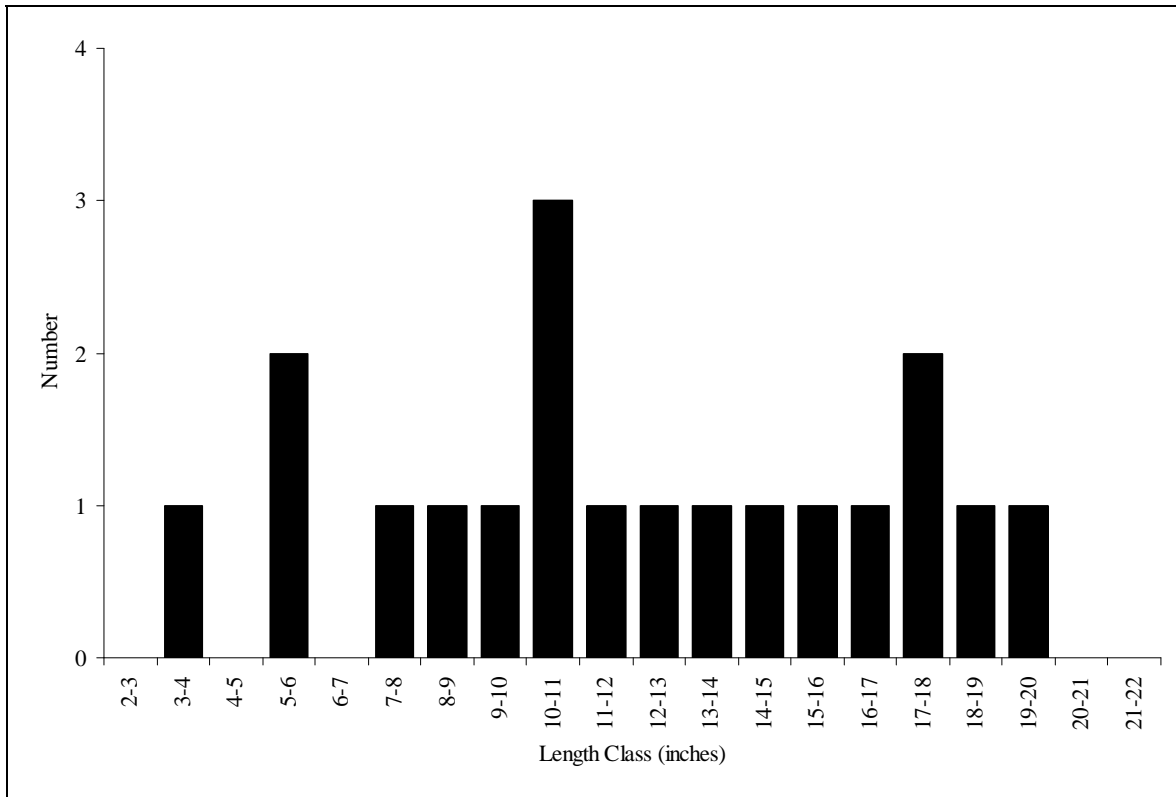


Figure 1. Length distribution of largemouth bass collected with electrofishing gear throughout Lake #1 at Three Lakes Park in 2009.