



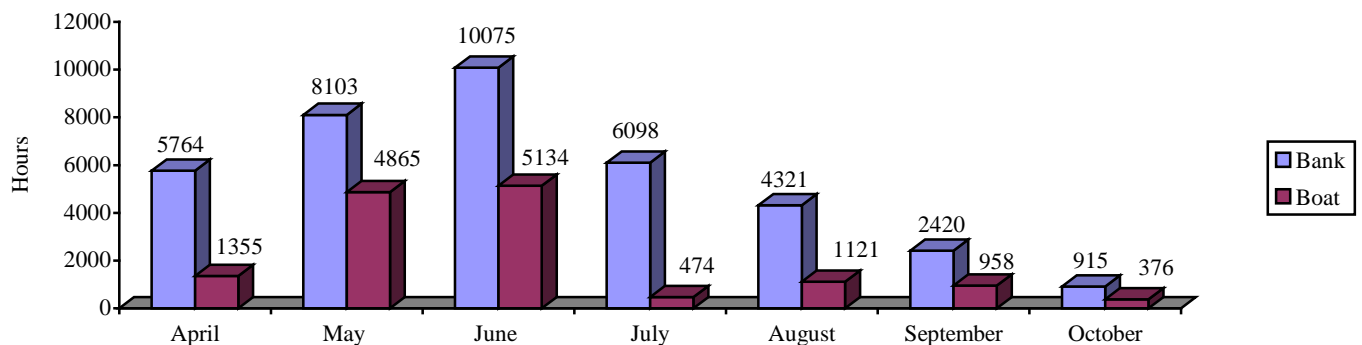
2012 Clinch River Angler Survey

From its origin near the town of Tazewell, the Clinch River flows some 135 miles through the heart of Southwest Virginia, reaching portions of Tazewell, Russell, Wise and Scott Counties before crossing the Tennessee state line. The Clinch contains more species of fish than any river in Virginia. It supports populations of sport fish like smallmouth bass, spotted bass, rock bass, sunfish, crappie, walleye, musky, freshwater drum, longnose gar, channel catfish, and flathead catfish. It also supports one of only two sauger populations in the state. Largemouth, white, and striped bass are also occasionally encountered, particularly in the lower reaches of the river.

In April-October of 2012 an angler survey was conducted on the Clinch River in Scott and Russell counties. The roving creel survey was conducted by vehicle along county roads adjacent to the river. The survey was conducted for 10-12 days per month on an AM or PM survey period chosen randomly. The survey was designed to encounter anglers fishing the Clinch and ask them to answer a series of questions about their angling practices and preferences.

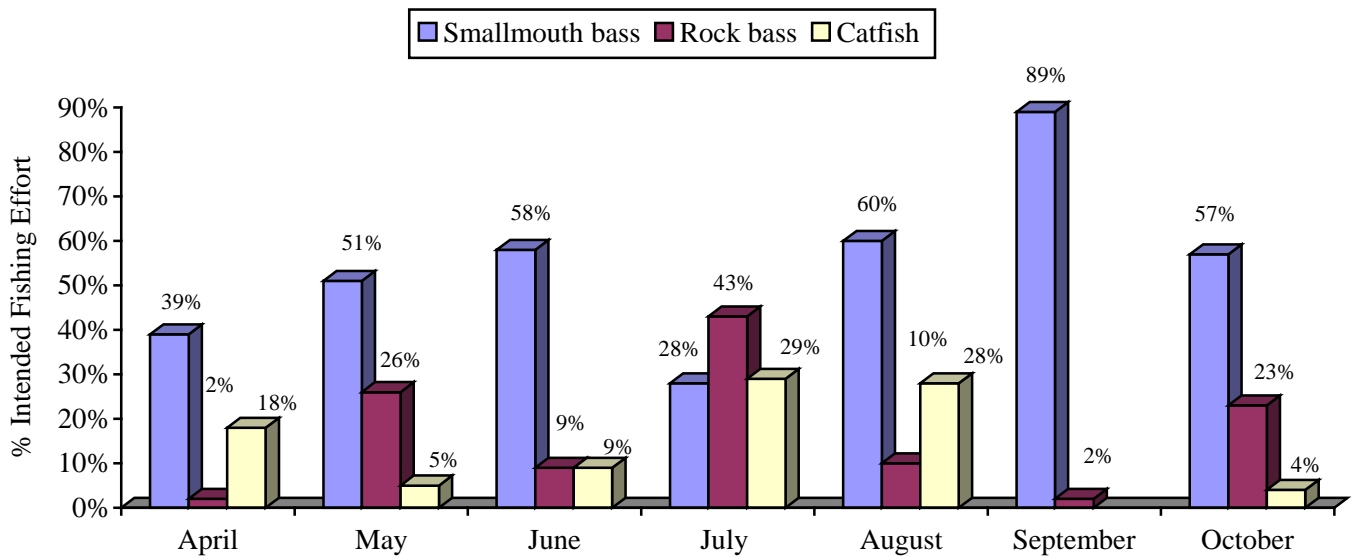
Each interview gathered information dealing with; the number of people in the fishing party, whether anglers were bank fishing or using a boat, the start and estimated ending time of fishing trip, and the zip code of the anglers interviewed. Anglers were asked about expenses incurred for the fishing trip, specifically; how much they spent on fuel, food, bait and lodging. Anglers were questioned about their satisfaction with the fishing trip, what species of fish they were targeting, and what they had caught, kept and released. Additionally, anglers were questioned about threatened and endangered freshwater mussels in the Clinch River system and about their opinions dealing with the legal sucker shooting season on the river. What follows is the summary of results for the entire survey period.

The following chart displays the number of hours fished for bank and boat anglers for the survey period by month. It was estimated that anglers spent a total of 51,979 hours fishing the Clinch River during the April-October fishing season.

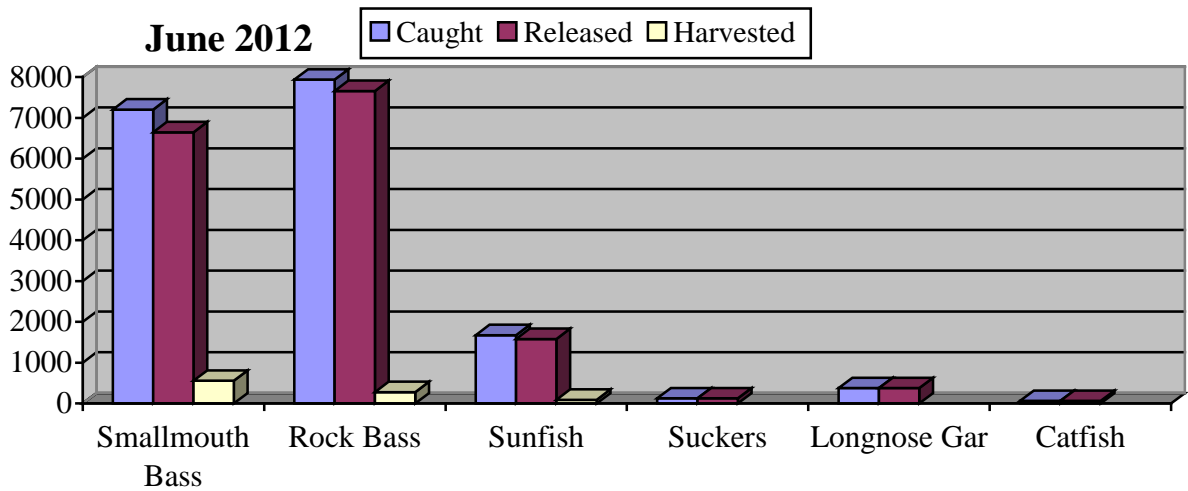
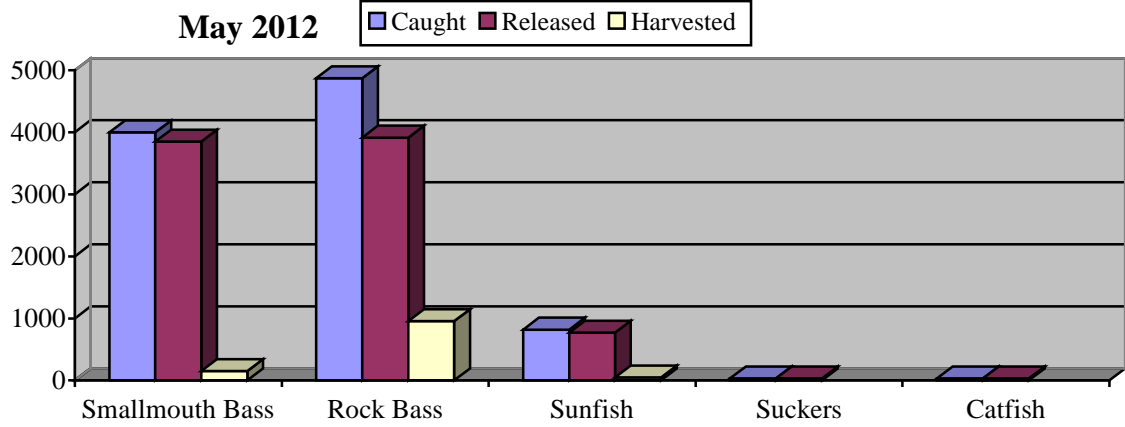
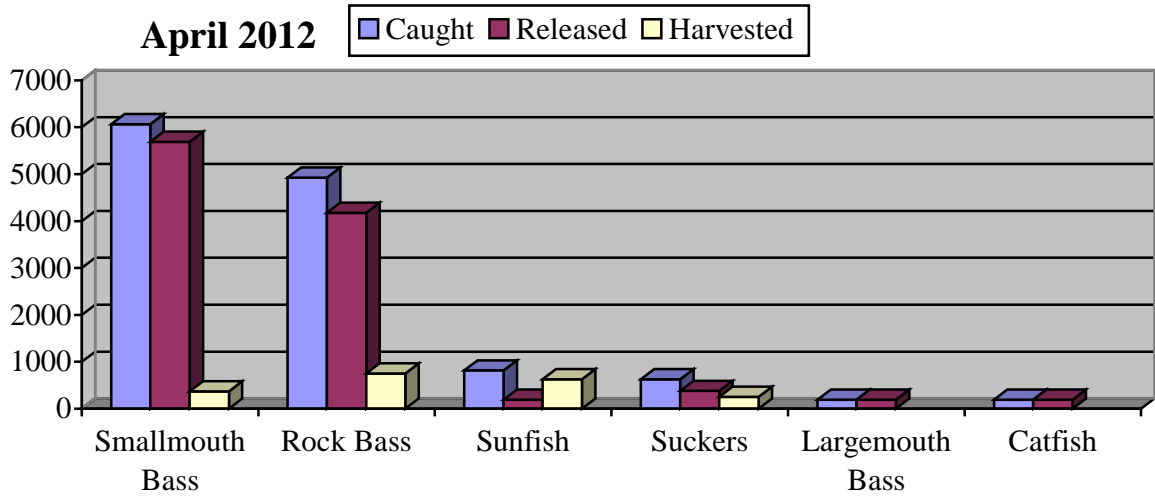


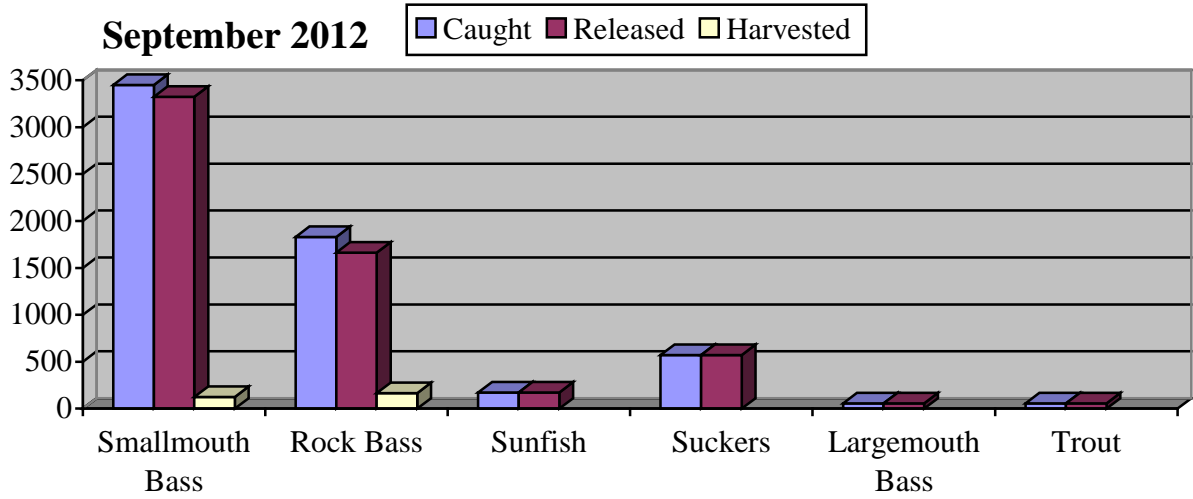
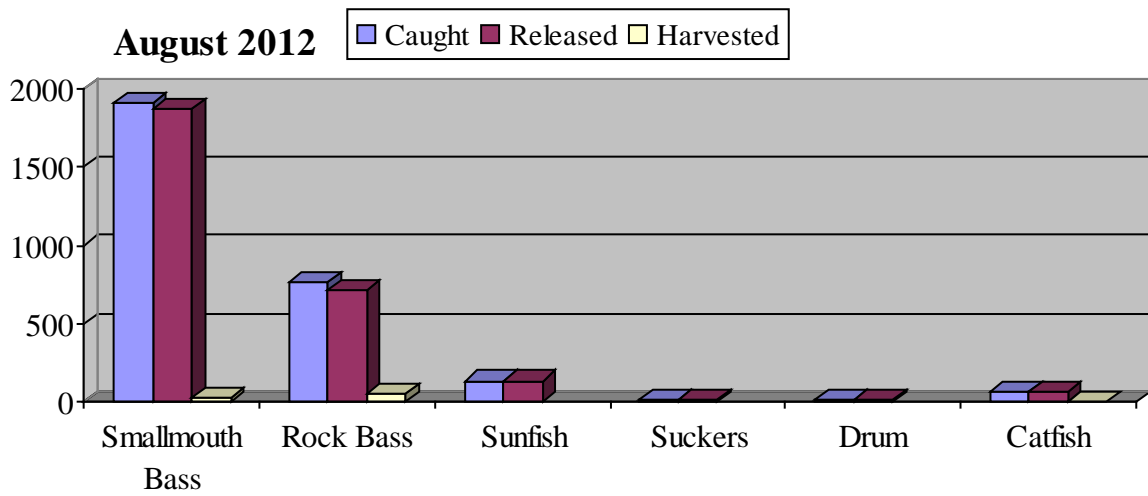
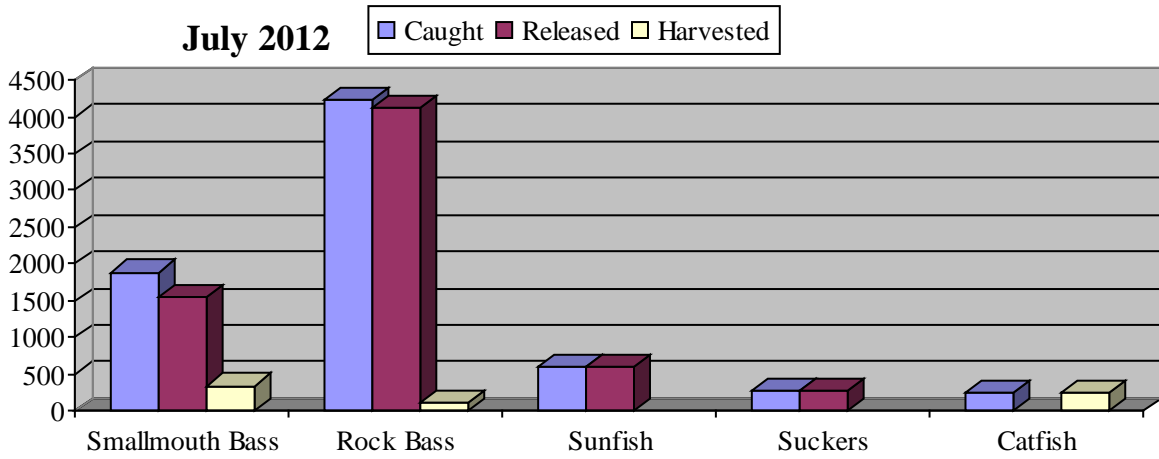
April, May, and June appear to be the most active fishing months on the Clinch River. It was estimated that anglers made 72% of all fishing trips during these months. A total of 29,034 fishing trips were estimated for the April-October survey period.

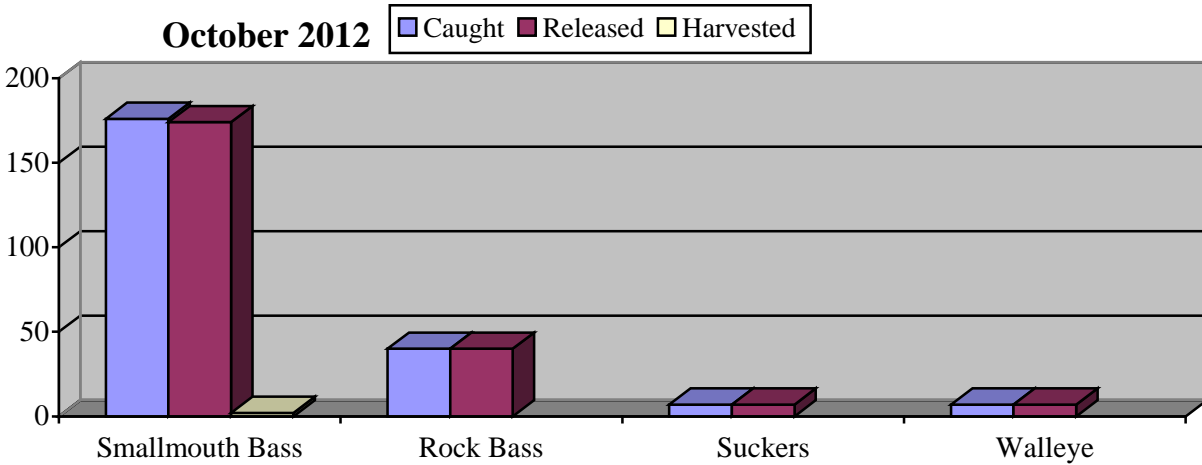
Anglers were asked to identify the fish species they were targeting when surveyed. The following chart summarizes the percent of intended fishing effort for the three most targeted species (smallmouth bass, rock bass, and catfish) by month for the survey period. Smallmouth bass were the most targeted fish species during the Clinch River survey. Intended fish effort for smallmouth bass accounted for 52% of the total effort. Fishing effort for rock bass was 16.2% of the total and intended fishing effort for catfish was 12.7%. Overall, approximately 81% of all fishing effort was focused on catching these three species. Based on the survey results the required time to catch one smallmouth bass was estimated to be 44 minutes, 1.6 hours to catch one rock bass and 2.6 hours to catch one catfish.



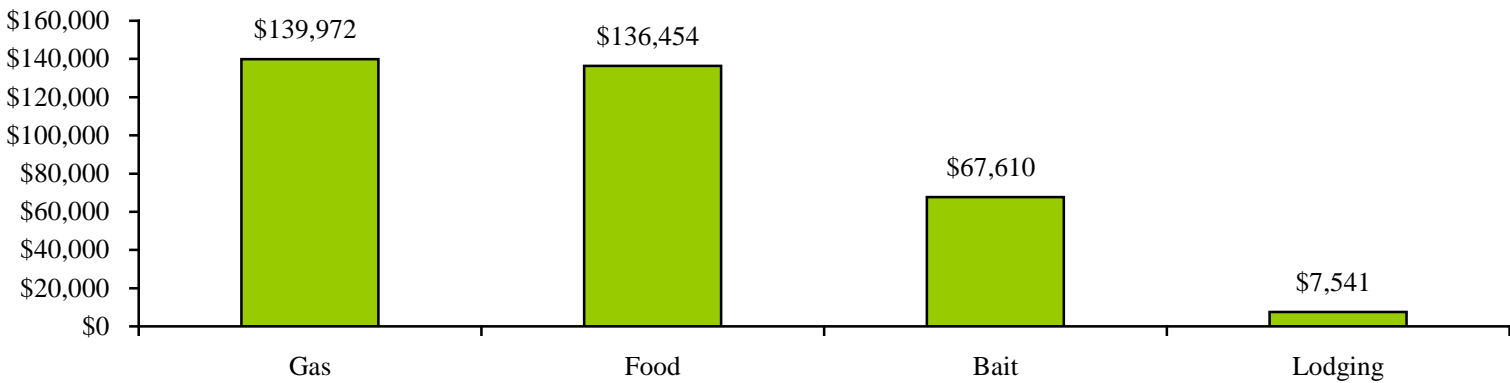
During the survey, anglers were questioned about the numbers and kind of fish they caught and what they were harvesting. The series of charts that follows shows by month the estimated numbers and species of fish anglers caught, released, and harvested for the survey period. Species vary by month based on reported catches by anglers. It was estimated that over the entire survey period anglers harvested 40% of all catfish caught, 30% of all suckers caught, 22% of all sunfish caught, 9% of all rock bass caught and 6% of all smallmouth bass caught. These numbers are comparable with similar surveys on Virginia's rivers.







When surveyed, anglers were asked questions about the amount of money they spent for gas, food, bait, and lodging to make the fishing trip. The following chart shows the estimated money expended by anglers for the entire survey. It was estimated that angler expenditures totaled \$350,963 for the April-October survey.



Anglers were questioned about the satisfaction of their fishing experience on the Clinch River. Most anglers (59%) rated their fishing experience as good to very good, while 25% of anglers rated their fishing experience as average. Fifteen percent of all anglers surveyed rated their fishing experience as fair or poor.

Anglers were also asked a series of four questions about endangered aquatic species and the firearms season for suckers on the Clinch River. When surveyed about their knowledge of the Clinch River being the location of multiple species of threatened or endangered freshwater mussels 73% said they were aware of the threatened and endangered mussels, while 27% responded as unaware. When questioned about their willingness to support restoration efforts of these species less than 5% of all anglers surveyed did not support restoration efforts. Only 9% of anglers surveyed had taken part in the open firearms season for suckers, while only 25% of all surveyed disapproved of the season.

In summary, most anglers surveyed in the 2012 survey fished for smallmouth bass, rock bass and catfish. May, June and July were the months with the most fishing activity, while September and October were the lowest. Angler catch was dominated by smallmouth bass, rock bass, and sunfish. Most anglers surveyed were bank fishermen. It was estimated that angler expenditures were \$350,963 during the survey period and most anglers were satisfied with their fishing experience. The results from this survey will assist fisheries resource managers in making decisions to best improve fishing opportunities on the Clinch River.

Prepared by: George Palmer, Fisheries Biologist with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries: (276) 783-4860; george.palmer@dgif.virginia.gov