

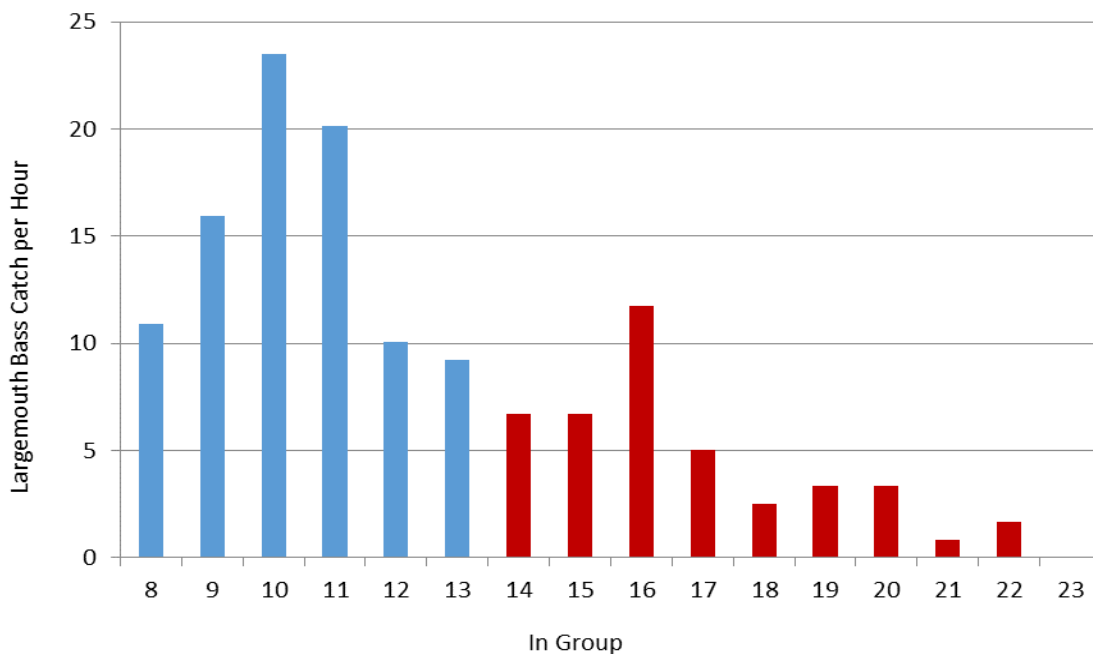


## Stonehouse Lake 2019 Management Report



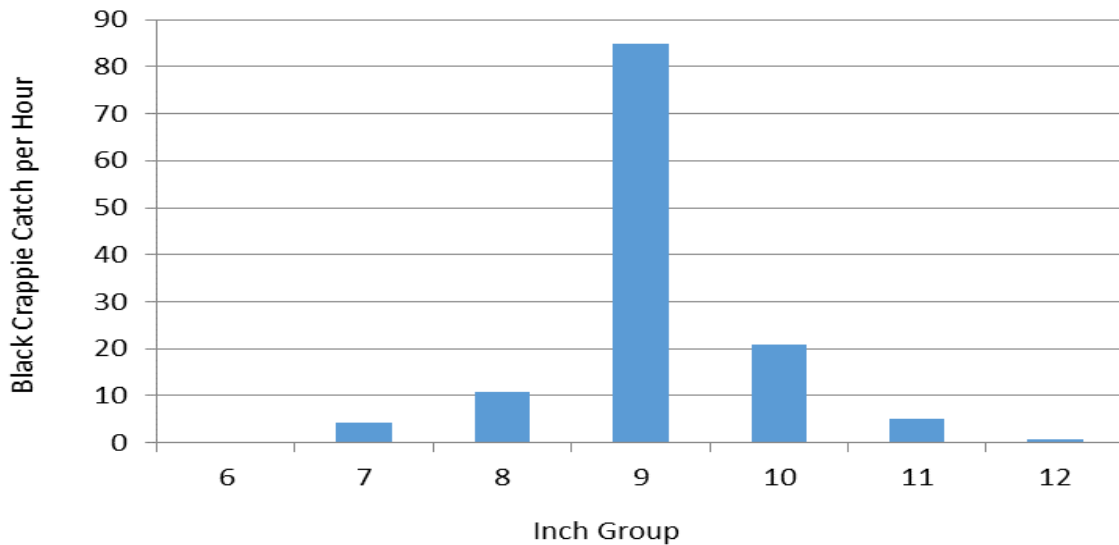
Stonehouse Lake is a 41-acre impoundment located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Amherst County. This is one of three public reservoirs owned by the County and offers very good fishing opportunities for bass, crappie, and sunfish. Various facilities include picnic tables with shelters, grills, restrooms, and play area. This lake has a good boat ramp for boat anglers but has limited bank fishing access. The reservoir is open year round but nighttime activities are prohibited except for fishing. Anglers are required to obtain a permit from the county of Amherst to fish at night. Boats propelled by oar or electric motor are welcome but outboard motor use is prohibited.

This small reservoir is one of the most productive largemouth bass fisheries in the region and consistently ranks as one of the better producers of quality size largemouth bass each year. Virginia Game & Inland Fisheries sampling indicates the bass population had been very good for many years. However, Stonehouse Lake is highlighted as one of the top small lake bass destinations in the region. As a result, the previous 12-15 inch protective slot limit was changed in 2013 to a 14-22 inch protected slot limit to protect declining large bass numbers and maintain the lake's full potential. Sampling conducted in 2018, indicated the number of bass over 15 inches is at historic highs and the number of bass over 20 inches has also improved but is not at historic levels. Catch rates by DGIF was approximately three times higher at Stonehouse Lake than other area small lakes for both these size groups.



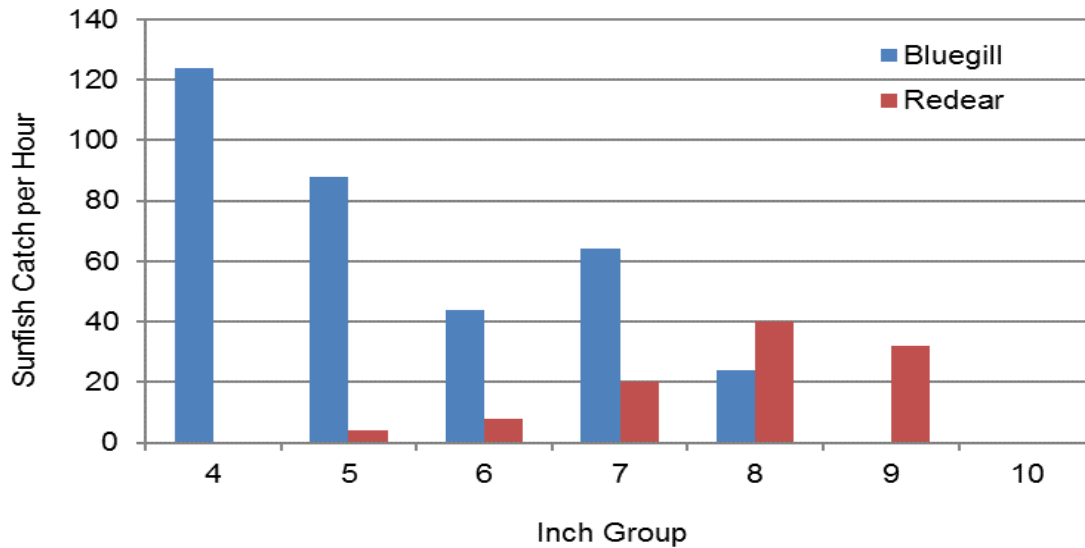
**Figure 1. Largemouth bass collected during the 2018 Stonehouse Lake electrofishing surveys. Red bars indicate protected sizes.**

The crappie population is more stable than most small reservoirs (<1,000 acres), but reproduction is inconsistent resulting in a fluctuating population. Most crappie were harvested at a young age and before reaching nine inches. Since the 9-inch minimum size limit was initiated in 2013, the number of crappie collected in DGIF samples has doubled for crappie 10 inches and larger. While the size limit cannot stabilize crappie reproduction, it does prevent the overharvest of young fish and provides a better quality fish. High crappie harvest rates continue to keep the population at a moderate level and similar to Mill Creek Lake, but still higher than most small reservoirs with fair numbers of 9-10 inch fish available. Catch rates by DGIF was approximately 25% times higher at Stonehouse Lake than other area small lakes for this size group.



**Figure 2. Crappie collected during the 2018 Stonehouse Lake electrofishing surveys.**

The sunfish population is dominated by bluegill, but contains good redear sunfish as well. The bluegill population maintains high densities and fish are abundant in the 5-8 inch groups. Redear sunfish numbers are stable and provide great sunfish opportunities with most fish in the 7-9 inch groups. Because Stonehouse Lake has good numbers of both bluegill and redear sunfish, it maintains the best sunfish fishery of the three Amherst County lakes and is one of the better sunfish lakes in the region.



**Figure 3. Sunfish collected during the 2018 Stonehouse Lake electrofishing surveys.**

Stonehouse Lake currently maintains a quality fishery with high fish abundance and balanced fish populations. This is a shallow reservoir with low water visibility, unlike neighboring Mill Creek and Thrasher Lakes. Reports from anglers indicate bass fishing can be challenging, probably due to the abundant forage.

To access this reservoir, turn northeast on Rt. 610 from Rt. 60 (approximately 9 miles west of Amherst), turn left on Rt. 625, and the lake access road will be the first road on the left. Permits for night fishing are available through Amherst County at 434-946-9371.

