



Albemarle Lake 2022



Albemarle Lake is a 35-acre impoundment built by the Civilian Conservation Corp. in 1938. The lake was one of the first public lakes in Albemarle County when it was purchased by the Department of Wildlife Resources. The lake was originally stocked with many different fish species but currently the lake contains self-sustaining populations of Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, Black Crappie, and bullhead catfish. Additionally, the lake is annually stocked with Channel Catfish. In 2021, the fish community of Albemarle Lake was sampled by boat electrofishing and trapnets. This report summarizes the results of these surveys and what anglers can expect to catch in Albemarle Lake.

A total of eleven fish species were collected in the 2021 surveys (Table 1). Largemouth Bass and Bluegill were the most abundant species collected in the electrofishing survey while Black Crappie and Bluegill were the most abundant species collected in the trapnet survey (Table 1). Lake Albemarle's Largemouth Bass population has fluctuated over the years from a quality fishery to an overcrowded/stunted population. Recent harvest efforts appear to have shifted the population back to a more balanced fishery with more fish showing up in the 11 to 13 inch range and some fish above 16 inches (Figure 1). There is still signs of stunting in smaller individuals with the uneven distribution of fish under 10 inches collected and less than ideal condition of small bass collected during the surveys (i.e. skinny fish). To continue the progress to a more balance population, anglers should still harvest as many of these small bass as legally possible (note: 5 bass per day creel limit for Virginia) to improve bass growth and to alleviate the stunting problem. The lake contains some quality bass, but anglers will have to work to catch them. The largest bass collected in 2021 measured nearly 23 inches and weighed close to 7 pounds. Largemouth Bass can be caught along the shoreline, especially along shoreline areas with fallen timber. Additionally, anglers should fish around the numerous fish attractors throughout the lake. The most prominent attractor is the old steel framed diving platform located near the boat launch.

Albemarle Lake continues to offer one of the best sunfish fisheries (Bluegill and Redear) for a small impoundment in Central Virginia. The electrofishing and trapnet catch rates for sunfish was lower than recent years but was likely due to annual sampling variability. The sunfish sample had large number of fish above harvestable size (> 7 inches, Figure 2). The lake produces excellent numbers of sunfish between 8 to 10 inches; with the occasional sunfish over 10 inches (Figure 2). The abundance of larger sunfish offers high potential for a trophy catch. Any serious sunfish anglers should give Albemarle Lake a visit. Sunfish can be found throughout the lake but the fallen trees around the shoreline and spawning flats just above and below the boat launch offer some of the best places to catch the big sunfish.

In 2012, a 10-inch minimum size limit for crappie was established to help a struggling crappie population in Lake Albemarle. The regulation is working to create a more robust fishery with the 2021 trapnet catch rate for crappie increasing to a decade high of 5 fish/net-night. This is much higher than the extreme low of 0.9 fish/net night observed in 2012 and closer to the expected rate for Central Virginia. Additionally, the size distribution of crappie collected shows a good distribution of fish between 7 and 13 inches (Figure 3). Approximately 70% of the fish collected in 2021 were under the protective harvest minimum of 10-inches and will stay in the

population to spawn and maintain the population. Growth rates of crappie remain good with fish approaching the harvestable size of 10 inches by age three (Figure 4). All but one crappie collected were Black Crappie.

A small number of Channel Catfish and bullhead catfish were collected in the 2021 surveys. Little is known about the catfish population, because catfish often frequent deeper water making them more difficult to catch with electrofishing and trapnet gears. Albemarle Lake is open to catfish anglers after dark so there is plenty of opportunity for anglers to catch some bullheads or stocked Channel Catfish.

Anglers looking for a remote location to fish with numerous bass and an excellent sunfish fishery should visit Albemarle Lake. There is ample parking, a gravel ramp that accommodates most boats, and areas to fish from the shoreline. Gas powered motors are prohibited, but a good trolling motor will get you to any area of the lake.

For more information on Albemarle Lake, please contact:

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Table 1. Species account and catch rates for fish collected throughout Albemarle Lake in 2021.

Species	Electrofishing				Trapnets		
	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of Catch		Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/net night)	Percentage of Catch
Black Crappie	62	56	25		96	5.0	43
Bluegill	43	39	17		34	1.7	15
Brown Bullhead	1	1	<1		24	1.2	11
Channel Catfish	5	5	2		4	0.2	2
Golden Shiner	10	9	4		None Collected		
Largemouth Bass	110	100	44		None Collected		
Redear Sunfish	8	7	3		5	0.3	2
Warmouth	9	8	4		23	1.2	10
White Crappie	None Collected				1	0.1	1
White Sucker	2	2	1		8	0.4	4
Yellow Bullhead	None Collected				26	1.3	12

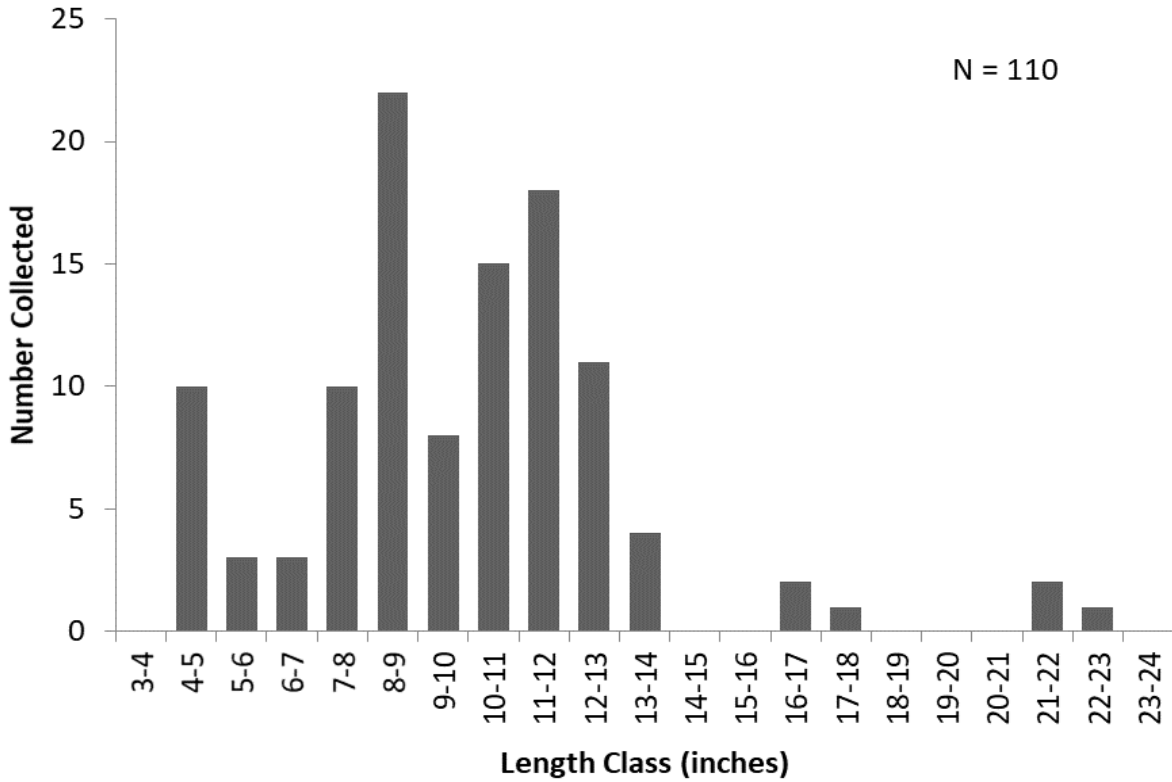


Figure 1. Length distribution of Largemouth Bass collected with electrofishing gear throughout Albemarle Lake in 2021.

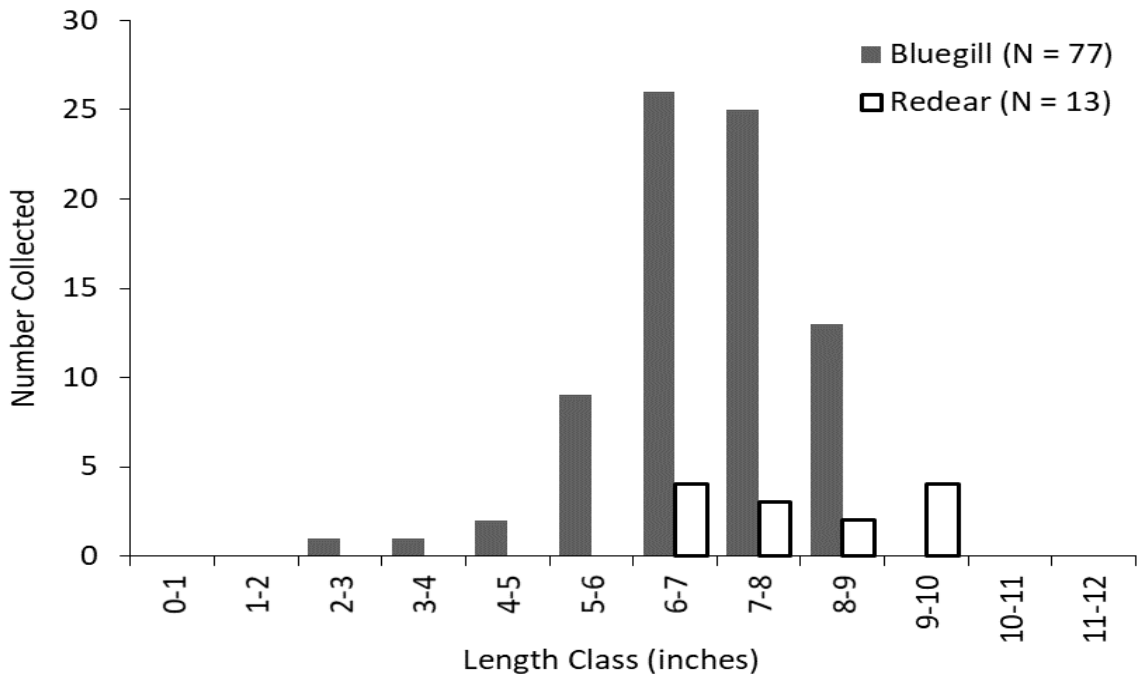


Figure 2. Length distribution of sunfish (Bluegill and Redear) collected throughout Albemarle Lake in 2021.

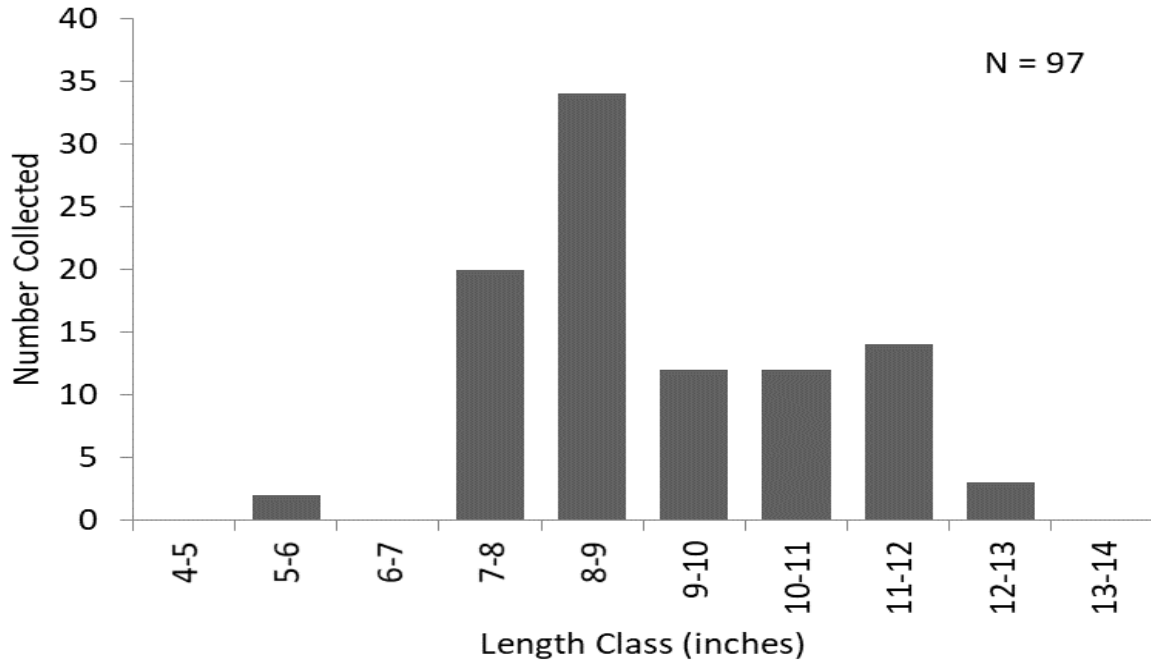


Figure 3. Length distribution of crappie collected with trapnets throughout Albemarle Lake in 2021.



Figure 4. Average length-at-age of crappie collected throughout Albemarle Lake in 2021. Error bars indicate standard error.