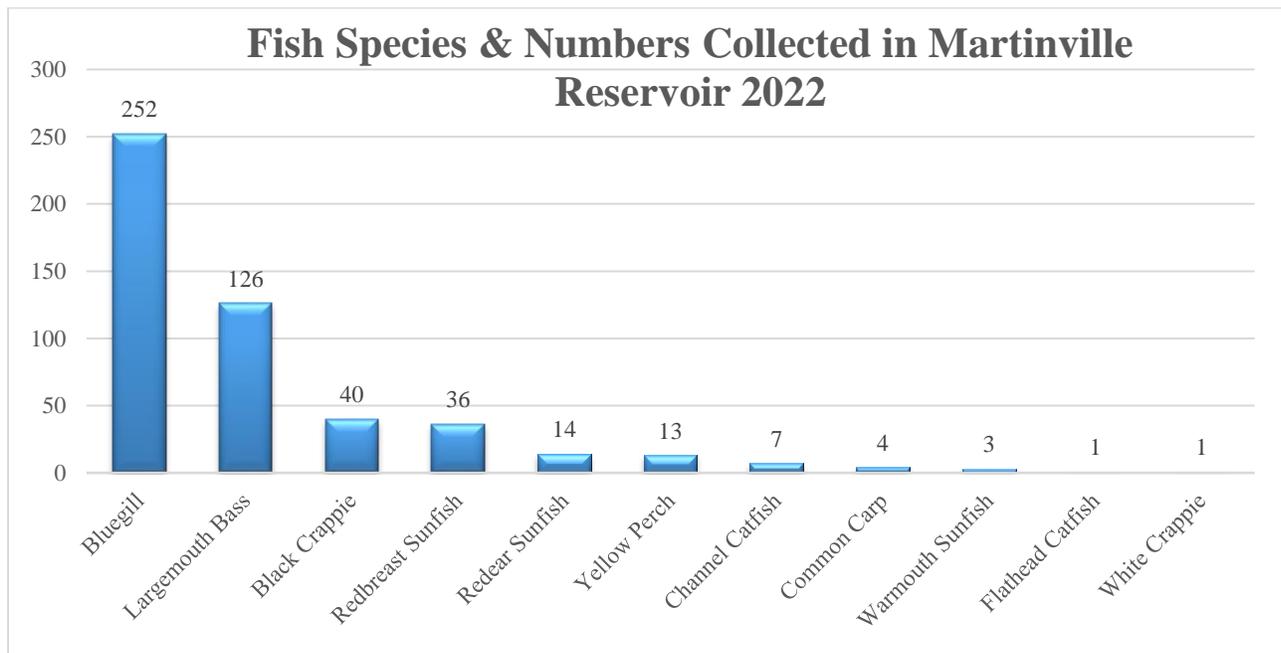


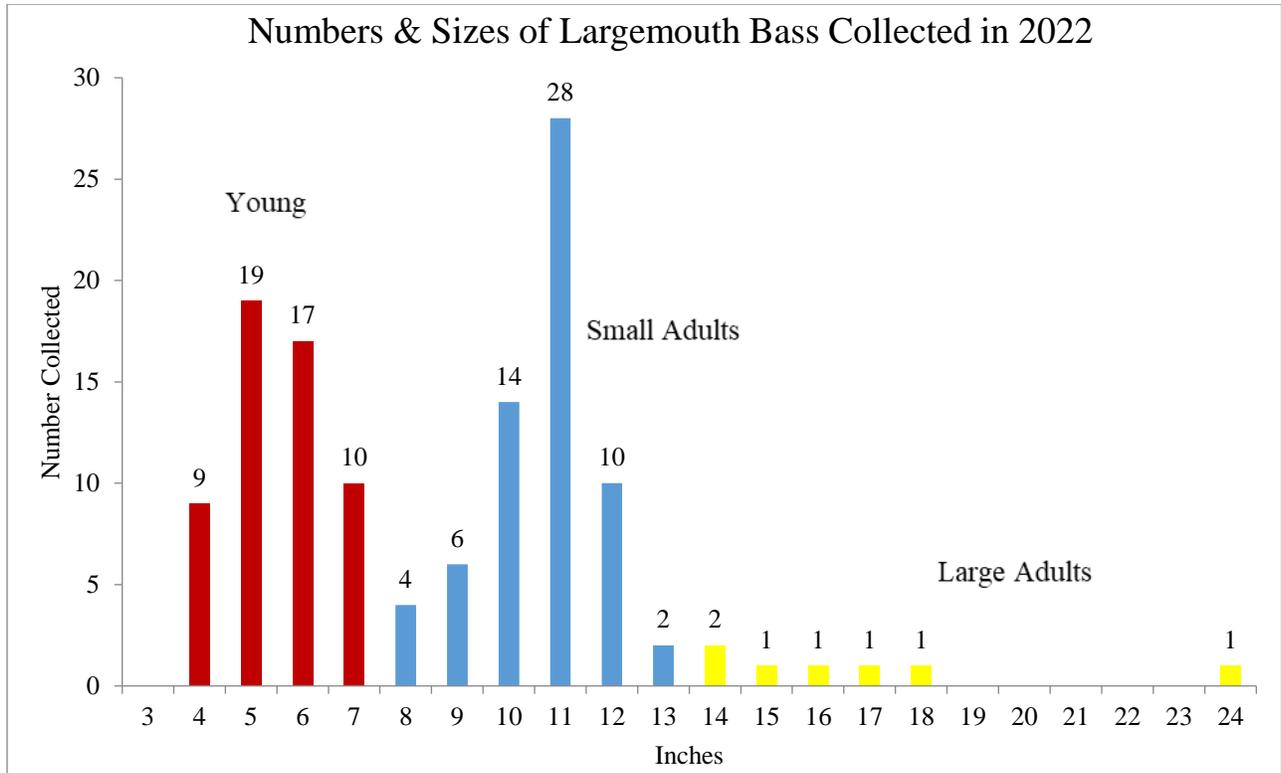


## Martinsville Reservoir 2023 Fisheries Report

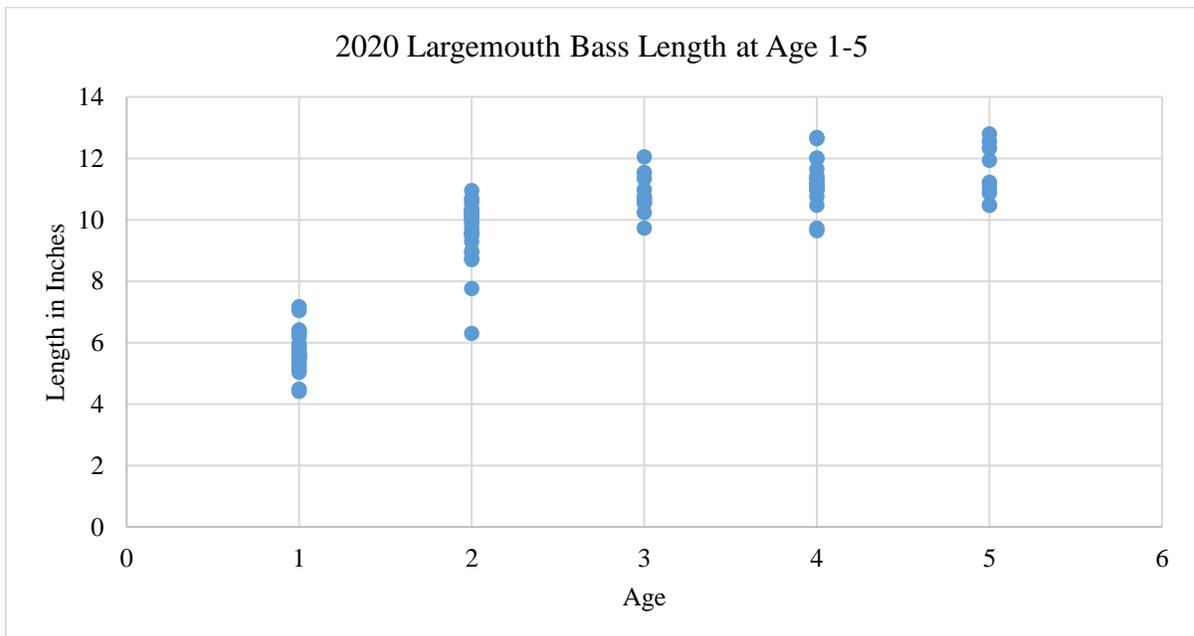
Martinsville Reservoir is a 175-acre impoundment located north of the city of Martinsville, Virginia. The impoundment is owned and operated by the city of Martinsville for water supply. The Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources manages the recreational fishery. The most popular sportfish species are largemouth bass, bluegill, redear and redbreast sunfish, black crappie, channel catfish and yellow perch. Data collected from fisheries surveys conducted in 2022 showed that the fishery in Martinsville Reservoir was in fair condition and considered to be a good place to go and catch small to average-sized fish in decent numbers. The chart below shows the fish species and numbers collected in spring 2022.



A total of 126 largemouth bass were collected in the 2022 sampling efforts, with sizes ranging from 3-24 inches. The sample consisted of 47% young fish (< 8 inches), 49% small sized adult fish (8-14 inches), and 4% larger adults (> 14 inches). Adult bass grow very slowly in Martinsville Reservoir. They reach 9 inches at age 2 and they generally do not grow past 13 inches by age 6. This results in a stockpile of bass in the 8 to 13 inch size range (as seen in the chart below). The young bass entering the population do not compete well with the large numbers of small adults and are likely to be eaten before they reach adult size.



To enhance growth, the previous 14-inch minimum size limit was discarded and replaced with a new 15-inch maximum length limit in 2015. This new limit allows largemouth bass below 15 inches to be removed and protects bass over 15 inches. This regulation should reduce the densities of the 8–13-inch bass and allow some to grow into larger size classes, by reducing competition for food resources, where they are protected from harvest. The following chart shows the current largemouth bass growth at ages 1-5 as measured in 2020. Time will tell if the new regulation causes a shift in the average size of adult largemouth bass.



## Alabama Bass

In 2017-2018, DWR biologists began collecting a few (spotted bass) Alabama bass in routine fish surveys. In 2020, genetic analysis confirmed the presence of Alabama bass in Martinsville Reservoir. Alabama bass (*Micropterus henshalli*) are one of approximately twelve species of black bass. They are an aggressive species that outcompetes largemouth bass and readily hybridizes with smallmouth and spotted bass. Alabama bass are nearly identical in appearance to spotted bass and were formerly known as the Alabama subspecies of the spotted bass. The other former subspecies of spotted bass, the Kentucky spotted bass, is found throughout Virginia and is native to the southwest portion of the Commonwealth.

Anglers can tell the difference between these different types of bass in Martinsville by applying some of these observations. The jaw of Alabama bass lines up with the middle rear of the eye, while largemouth bass jaws extend past the eye. Alabama bass have a dark, blotchy lateral band from head to tail, and have spots below this band. Largemouth bass have a more continuous lateral band. Alabama bass also typically have a tooth patch on their tongue, which is rare in largemouth bass. Alabama and spotted bass are differentiated by differences in lateral line scale counts or genetic analysis. For more information on how to identify Alabama bass checkout the following information at the DWR webpage, <https://dwr.virginia.gov/wildlife/fish/alabama-bass/>



Photo of an Alabama Bass collected at Philpott Reservoir in the spring of 2021

Anglers are the primary vector for the spread of Alabama bass in Virginia. Current populations are the results of angler introductions that have occurred over the last five years. Anglers are reminded that it is illegal to stock fish into a public body of water without an authorization from the DWR. Anyone with knowledge of intentional stockings of Alabama or spotted bass should contact DWR law enforcement at 800-237-5712 or [WildCrime@dwr.virginia.gov](mailto:WildCrime@dwr.virginia.gov). As of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, Alabama bass

have been added to Virginia's Predatory and Undesirable Species List. New regulations have made live possession of this species unlawful outside of the body of water of catch. Violations of this regulation are a class III misdemeanor. There is no bag or size limit on Alabama bass and anglers are encouraged to harvest any that they capture.

The Crappie population in Martinsville is comprised primarily of black crappie. Forty black crappies were collected during the 2022 sampling. Sizes ranged from 4-12 inches with many in the 7–10-inch range. The abundance of crappie in the reservoir can vary due to cyclical reproductive success and heavy harvest rates. Anglers can expect to catch good numbers of crappies in the next several years. Most crappie can be found around structure, like beaver lodges and fallen trees, and anglers should concentrate their efforts in these areas for best results. However, crappie may concentrate in deeper water, away from shoreline cover during the summer.

Bluegill, redbreast, and redear are members of the sunfish family and can be caught in Martinsville Reservoir. Samples collected in 2022 included all these species, making up 61% of all the fish collected. Anglers can expect good numbers of these species in their catch in 2022 as efforts to increase fish habitat and stock bluegill have been underway to enhance the sunfish population. Fish attractors have been placed in several locations near the main parking access and bank fishing locations to increase the abundance of sunfish in these areas. Additionally, bluegill were stocked in 2018-19 and 2021-22 to increase abundance.



Channel catfish are another commonly sought-after fish species in Martinsville Reservoir. Channel catfish were traditionally stocked as fingerling fish (3-4 inches) and provided very limited fishing opportunities. Channel catfish are now stocked at 10 inches in length, which has improved their survival and the fishery. Channel catfish were stocked in fall 2022. The best fishing occurs several months after stocking, but survival is adequate enough to provide good catfishing opportunities throughout the year.

Yellow perch were first collected in 1987 and the population level has been low since that time. The population is small and provides a limited fishery with few numbers of fish available in the 8–10-

inch range. The highest densities of yellow perch are in the lower half of the reservoir. Thirteen yellow perch were collected in 2022 sampling with sizes ranging from 4-9 inches.

Since this reservoir has motor restrictions, most fishing pressure occurs in the lower lake areas and areas near the boat ramp and parking lot. Anglers that have the time and battery power to travel to the upper end of the reservoir will be rewarded with more opportunities to catch quality fish. Since the water in this reservoir is usually very clear, most fish will be easily spooked. Anglers may want to use a light fishing line and keep as much distance as possible between their boat and the structure they are fishing. The city of Martinsville maintains a park at Martinsville Reservoir, which includes picnic facilities and a boat ramp. Use of the park and reservoir are restricted to the hours of sunrise to sunset and a boat permit is required to launch boats. The permit is \$3 per day or \$15 per calendar year. Permits can be acquired from the reservoir office or by calling 276-251-7766. Boaters are restricted to electric motor use only. The reservoir can be accessed by taking Rt. 108 from Rt. 174 out of Collinsville or Martinsville.

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