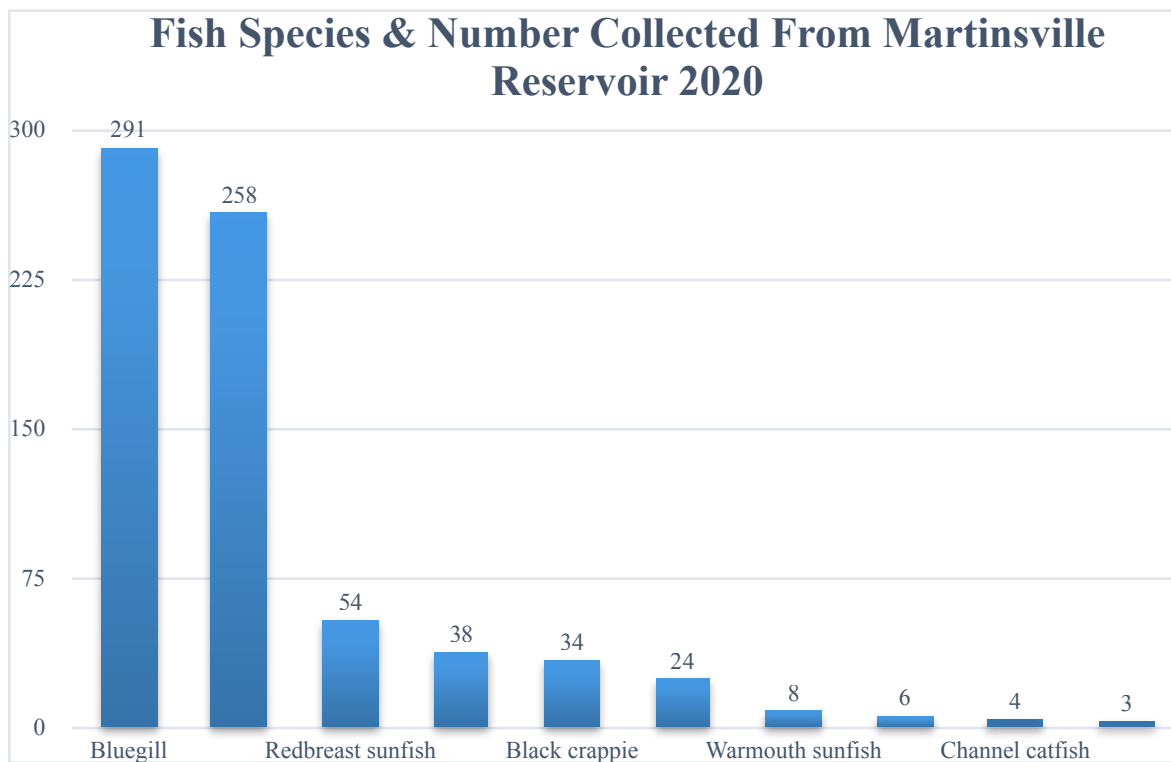




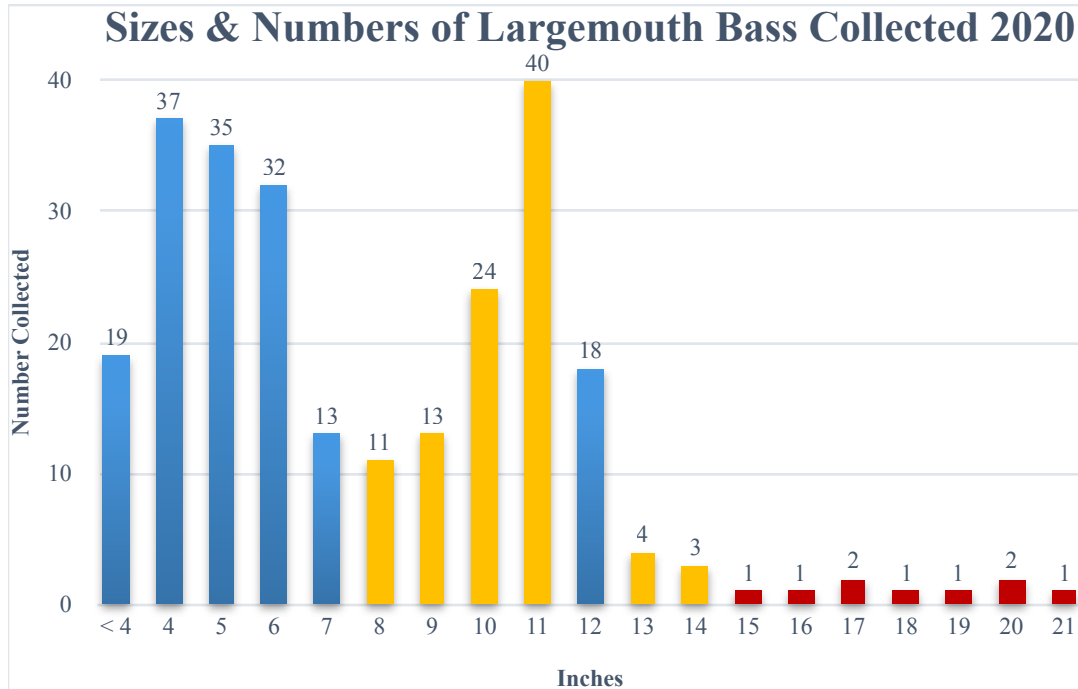
## Martinsville Reservoir 2021 Management Report

Martinsville Reservoir is a 175-acre impoundment located just north of the city of Martinsville, Virginia. The impoundment is owned and controlled by the city of Martinsville for water supply, while the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources manages the fishery. The most popular sportfish species are largemouth bass, bluegill, redear and redbreast sunfish, black crappie, channel catfish and yellow perch. Fish surveys conducted during 2020 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 species and number of sport fish collected in spring 2020.



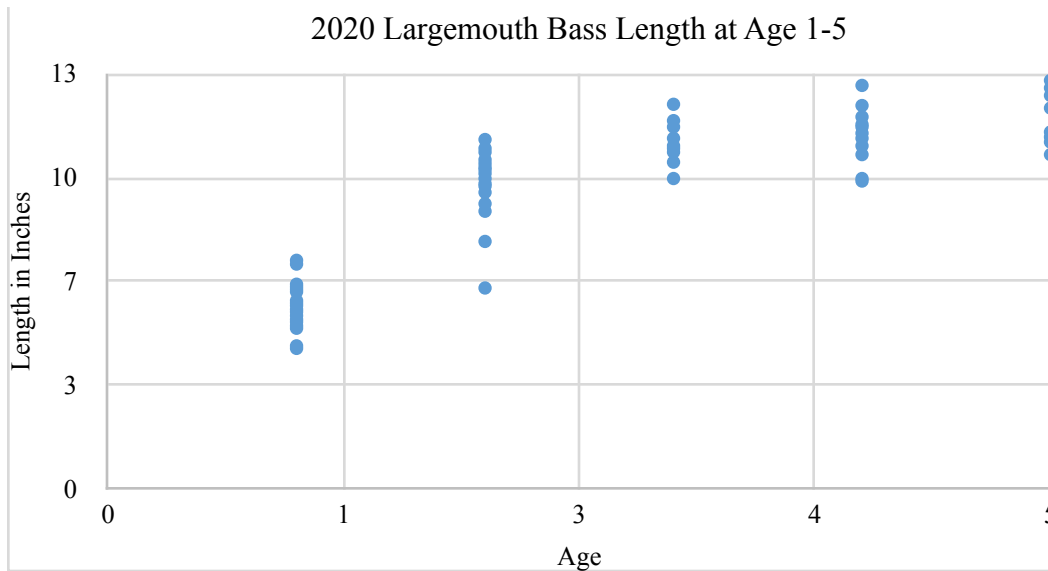
A total of 258 largemouth bass were collected in the 2020 sampling efforts, with sizes ranging from 3-21 inches. The sample consisted of 53% young fish (< 8 inches), 43% small sized adult fish (8-14 inches), and 4% larger adults (> 14 inches). Adult bass grow very slowly in Martinsville Reservoir. They 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.



Small Adults   Large Adults   Young

To address the slow growth condition, 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 taken and protects bass over 15 inches. This new regulation should reduce the densities of the 8-13 inch bass, and allow some to grow into the larger size classes, 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 will cause a shift in the average size of adult largemouth bass.



### Alabama Bass

In 2020, genetic analysis confirmed the presence of Alabama bass in Martinsville Reservoir. In 2017-2018 DWR biologists began collecting a few Alabama bass in routine fish surveys. 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/>

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 ten 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). Anglers who suspect they have captured an Alabama bass should take a picture of the fish, clip off a thumbnail-sized portion of one of the pelvic fins, and store the fin clip dry in an envelope. The pelvic fins are located on the bottom of the fish, just under the head. They should then either contact the DWR at [fisheries@dwr.virginia.gov](mailto:fisheries@dwr.virginia.gov) or at 804-367-1293. 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 picture below shows an Alabama Bass.



The Crappie population is comprised primarily of black crappie. Thirty-four black crappies were collected during the 2020 sampling. Sizes ranged from 8-11 inches with many in the 8-9 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 2020 included all of these species, making up 53% of all the fish collected. Anglers can expect good numbers of these species in their catch in 2021 as efforts to increase fish habitat have been underway to enhance the sunfish population. Fish attractors have been placed in several sites near the main access and bank fishing locations to increase the abundance of sunfish in these areas. Additionally, bluegill have been stocked in 2018 and 2019 to enhance bluegill numbers.



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 around 8-10 inches in length, which has improved their survival and the fishery. Channel catfish were stocked in October 2020. 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. Twenty-four yellow perch were collected in 2020 sampling with sizes ranging from 4-10 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 line and keep as much distance 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.

**Prepared by: George Palmer, Fisheries Biologist with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources: (434) 525-7522; [george.palmer@dwr.virginia.gov](mailto:george.palmer@dwr.virginia.gov)**