



Mint Springs Lakes 2024



Located just west of Crozet in Albemarle County, the two Mint Springs lakes are small (< 5 acres) recreation impoundments administered by Albemarle Parks and Recreation. The lakes are part of the Department's put-and-take trout stocking program, but also contain several warm water species including Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, and Black Crappie. Channel Catfish are stocked in both lakes to create an additional fishery. In 2022, the parks department drained the upper lake to renovate the failing control tower which led to a temporary closure of the lake and the loss of the lake fishery. The lake was refilled in the spring of 2023 and Bluegill, Redear sunfish, and Channel Catfish were stocked to reestablish the fishery. Largemouth Bass are scheduled for restocking in 2024. Additionally, the fish community of the lower Mint Springs Lake was sampled in 2023 by boat electrofishing. This report summarizes the result of this survey and what anglers can expect to catch in the Mint Springs lakes.

The fish community of the lower lake is limited by small waterbody size. The main fishing attraction is the popular put-and-take trout stocking program. During sampling numerous trout were observed but were not collected. Excluding trout, a total of five fish species were collected in the lake during the 2023 survey (Table 1). Largemouth Bass and Bluegill were the most abundant species collected in the lake (Table 1).

The Largemouth Bass fisheries in the lower lake is severely stunted with bass stockpiling at sizes below 12 inches (Figure 1). Only two bass over 15 inches were collected in 2023 but larger bass can be hard to catch in such deep and clear lakes. The largest bass collected in the survey measured 20 inches and weighed 5.5 pounds. To correct stockpiling and produce more quality Largemouth Bass, anglers should harvest every bass caught under 12 inches within the 5 bass per day statewide creel limit. Once harvest is increased, Largemouth Bass growth will improve, and more bass will grow to larger sizes. There is a 12-22 protective slot limit enforced at both lakes to protect the limited number of large bass produced. Additionally, harvest of only one Largemouth Bass over 22 is allowed per angler per day.

The sunfish population, primarily Bluegill and Black Crappie, was limited in numbers and most sunfish collected were small (< 9 inches, Figure 2). Previous surveys indicate that there are some larger sunfish in the lower lake for anglers to catch but the fishery is limited. Anglers targeting these sunfish should concentrate efforts around structure like fallen trees or around areas with lake bottom drop-offs.

The trout fisheries within the Mint Springs lakes are major fishing attractions but there are ample opportunities to catch other species including stocked Channel Catfish. Only one Channel Catfish was collected during the survey, but low collections are expected with electrofishing gear. DWR and Albemarle County are working to reestablish the warm-water fishery in the upper Mint Spring Lake and anglers should experience a quality fishery in the lake over the next few years. The Mint Springs Park has wonderful amenities including a fishing pier in the lower lake, abundant bank fishing access, and picnic areas. Swimming is the big attraction in the upper lake during the summer, but there is ample room for anglers to enjoy shore fishing. Mint Springs is open during daylight hours, and a small fee is required to enter the park. Boats are prohibited on both lakes.

For more information on the Mint Springs lakes please contact:

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Table 1. Species account and catch rates for fish collected throughout the lower Mint Springs Lake in 2023.

Species	Number Collected	Catch per Effort (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of the Catch
Black Crappie	2	8	4
Bluegill	8	30	15
Channel Catfish	1	4	2
Largemouth Bass	37	139	68
Warmouth Sunfish	6	22	11

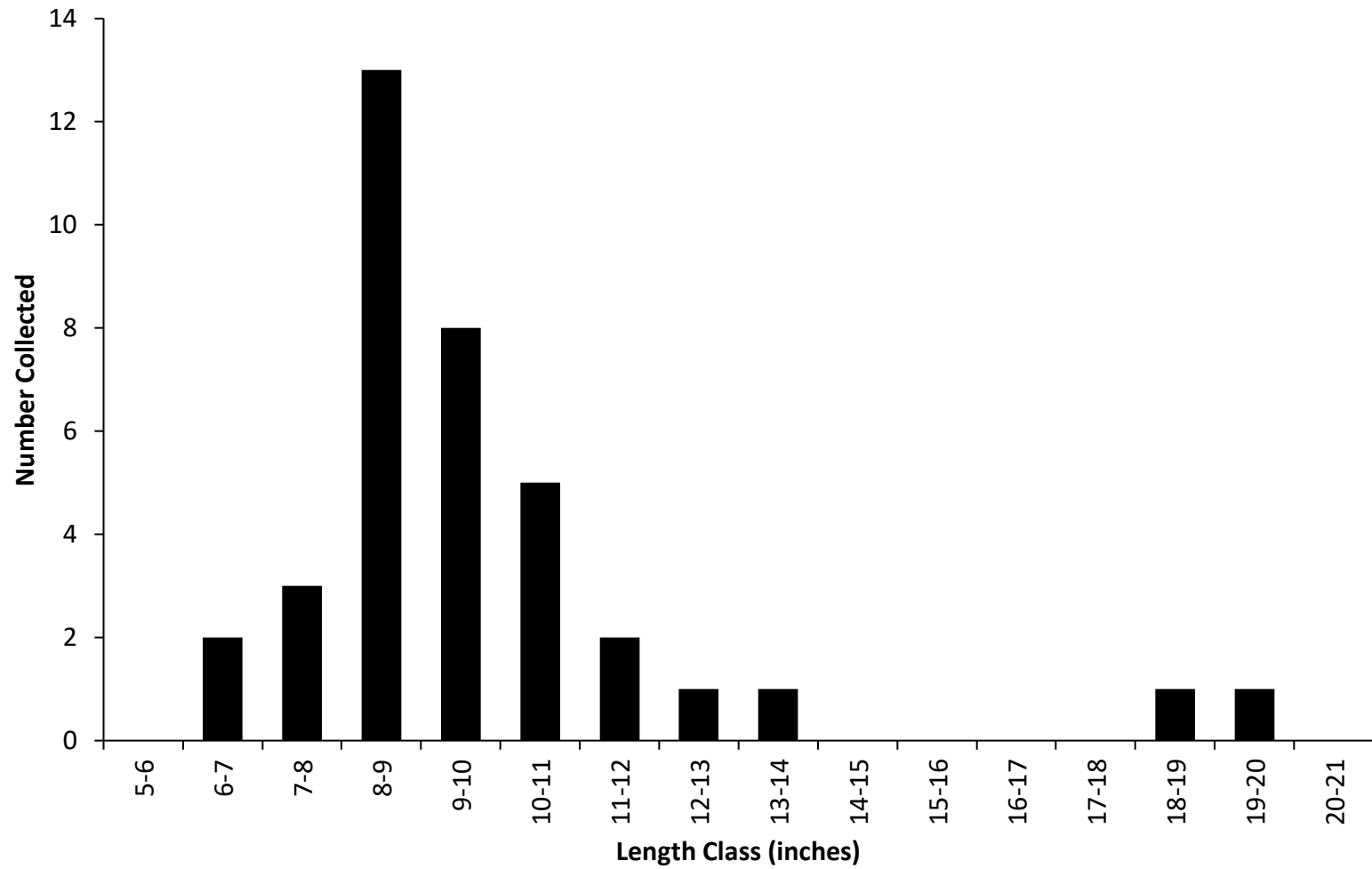


Figure 1. Length distribution of Largemouth Bass collected throughout the lower Mint Springs Lake in 2023.

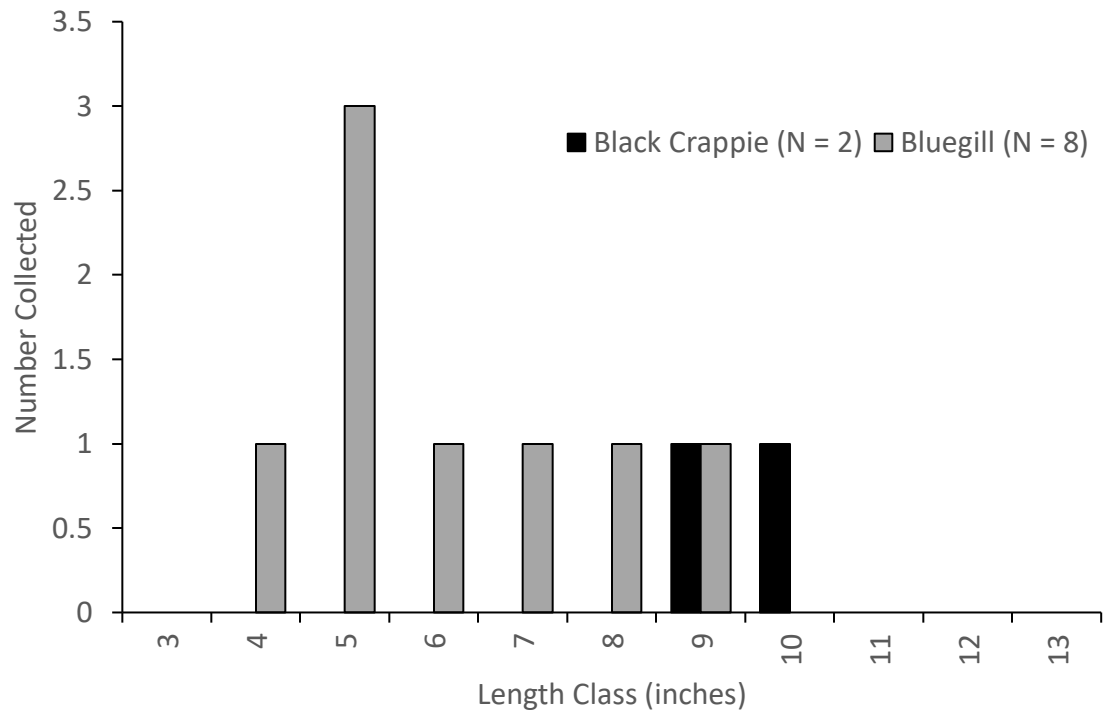


Figure 2. Length distribution of Bluegill and Black Crappie collected throughout lower Mint Springs Lake in 2023.