



## Ragged Mountain Reservoir 2026



**NOTICE TO USERS: THE RIVANNA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY IS TEMPORARILY LIMITING ACCESS TO THE RESERVOIR TO CLEAR TIMBER FOR RESERVIOR EXPANSION. IN THE FALL OF 2025, RESERVOIR ROAD WILL BE CLOSED FROM HOLIDAY TRAILS LANE TO THE UPPER PAPERKING LOT. TRAILS LOCATED ON THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE RESERVOIR WILL REMAIN OPEN AND USERS WILL HAVE ACCESS FROM THE LOWER PARKING LOT ON RESERVOIR ROAD. BANK FISHING WILL BE ALLOWED DURING THE CONSTRUCTION PERIOD WHICH IS EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED BY JANUARY 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026. UPDATES CAN BE FOUND AT <https://rivannawater.org/press-release-construction-to-start-at-the-ragged-mountain-reservoir/>.**

Ragged Mountain Reservoir is a 170-acre water supply impoundment owned and managed by the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority. The reservoir is situated in the 980-acre Ragged Mountain Natural Area just outside the city of Charlottesville. The area is composed of mature forest with trails and bank access that is maintained by the City of Charlottesville. The reservoir contains self-sustaining populations of Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, Black Crappie, and Yellow Perch and is stocked annually with fingerling Muskellunge (Musky) to provide additional angling opportunities. Even though the lake is situated just outside of the city limits and within view of Interstate 64, it has a small watershed that is buffered by a mature forest that limits lake productivity and fish production. In the spring of 2025, the fish community of the reservoir was sampled by boat electrofishing gear during the day and at night. Typically, electrofishing surveys are conducted during the day, but night sampling was conducted to better capture fish in the deep, clear water of the reservoir. This report summarizes the results of these surveys and what anglers can expect to catch in the Ragged Mountain Reservoir.

The reservoir's fish community is typical for central Virginia with six fish species collected in the 2025 surveys (Table 1). Largemouth Bass and Bluegill were most abundant species collected during the daytime sample, while Largemouth Bass and Redear were the most abundant in the night sample (Table 1). Largemouth Bass catch rates were higher than expected for the clear, low productivity lake. The night catch was especially high because the fish were not fleeing from the shadow of the boat in the clear water. The reservoir has an abundance of bass in the 8–14-inch range but very few bass above 15 inches were collected (Figure 1). Nearly 93% of bass collected measured under the preferred size of 15 inches with 62% collected under 12 inches, indicating stockpiling and overcrowding of smaller bass. Additionally, these < 15-inch bass appear to be in poor condition with the average relative weight for adult fish below 80 (ideal range between 90 and 100). Angler harvest of small bass (especially bass < 13 inches) is encouraged to alleviate overcrowding and increase bass growth rates. Even with the overcrowding, there are a few larger bass in the reservoir with the largest bass collected in the 2025 surveys measured nearly 20 inches and weighed approximately 3.3 pounds. Anglers will have to work and weed through smaller bass to find the larger fish. The most productive areas for bass were around woody structures like fallen bank trees and around main lake points.

Bluegill and Redear catch rates were excellent with Bluegill more abundant during the day and Redear more abundant at night (Table 1). The bulk of Bluegill and Redear collected were in the 5-to-8-inch range with fish up to 11 inches observed (Figure 2). Many of the larger fish collected were Redear that were active at night on flats around the old dam that originally separated the lake into two. Anglers determined to catch quality sunfish should concentrate their efforts on big Redear during the spring and early summer around these flats on the old dam.

Ragged Mountain Reservoir offers fisheries for Black Crappie and Yellow Perch but both seemed limited in numbers based off the 2025 surveys. Black Crappie up to 13 inches were collected during the surveys (Figure 3), with the average crappie measuring close to the preferred angler size of 10 inches. Yellow perch ranged in size from 6 to 16 inches with the bulk of the fish in the 7-to-10-inch range (Figure 3). Electrofishing for crappie and yellow perch, especially in a deep, clear reservoir, is not the preferred method due to the species' tendencies to inhabit deep water that is beyond the effective range of the gear. For this reason, the crappie and Yellow Perch populations are likely much larger than the numbers observed from the 2025 samples. Anglers that target these species should expect catches of 9 inch and larger fish but will have to explore the reservoir to find the schools of fish often suspended in deeper water or around structure. Fishing on sandy flats in the back of coves or around main lake points in the early spring, March-April, is another good technique to target crappie and Yellow Perch during their spawning seasons.

In 2017, Ragged Mountain Reservoir was added to the agencies musky stocking program. Initially there were limitations in musky propagation that limited stockings in the reservoir on an annual basis. Fortunately, there were some sporadic stockings since 2018, and the lake has received consistent stockings over the last four years. No musky were collected during the 2025 survey, but some were observed swimming away from the electrofishing boat during the survey. Additionally, there have been multiple angler reports of musky catches in the reservoir. The observations and angler reports indicate that musky in the reservoir are reaching 30+ inch sizes. Anglers searching for musky should concentrate on fishing in the cooler months when musky are actively feeding. Fishing for musky in the late winter and early spring can be an exceptionally good time to target the species. Musky in Ragged Mountain are regulated under a 30-inch minimum length limit and a 2-fish daily creel limit.

Anglers looking for a scenic location in the Charlottesville area should visit the Ragged Mountain Reservoir. The lake is just outside the city limits but offers a location within the Ragged Mountain Natural Area that feels secluded and remote. The lake provides multiple fisheries for anglers, a boating location for paddlers, and wildlife viewing and hiking opportunities for outdoor enthusiasts. Gas powered motors are prohibited on the reservoir and there is no formal boat landing; carry-in watercraft and paddle boards are allowed. Boaters should know that they will have to carry watercraft and equipment approximately 60 yards down a hill from the parking area to the lake shore. The natural area and lake are open daily from 7am till dusk and dogs and swimming are prohibited. Visitors can access the area by following Rt. 702 (Reservoir Road) off the N/Fontaine Ave exit from US-29. The Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority is expanding the capacity of the reservoir to meet future water demands so visitors may experience water level changes and access limitations in future years. Please check the Water Authority or the City of Charlottesville websites to check for any area closures.

For more information on the Ragged Mountain Reservoir visit  
<https://www.charlottesville.gov/facilities/facility/details/Ragged-Mountain-Natural-Area-40>, or  
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Table 1. Species account and catch rates for fish collected throughout Ragged Mountain Reservoir in 2025.

Species	Electrofishing - Day Sample			Electrofishing - Night Sample		
	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of Catch	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of Catch
Black Crappie	39	39	11	19	19	5
Bluegill	210	210	57	33	33	8
Green Sunfish	2	2	1	4	4	1
Largemouth Bass	78	78	21	184	184	44
Redear Sunfish	34	34	9	161	161	38
Yellow Perch	7	7	2	20	20	5

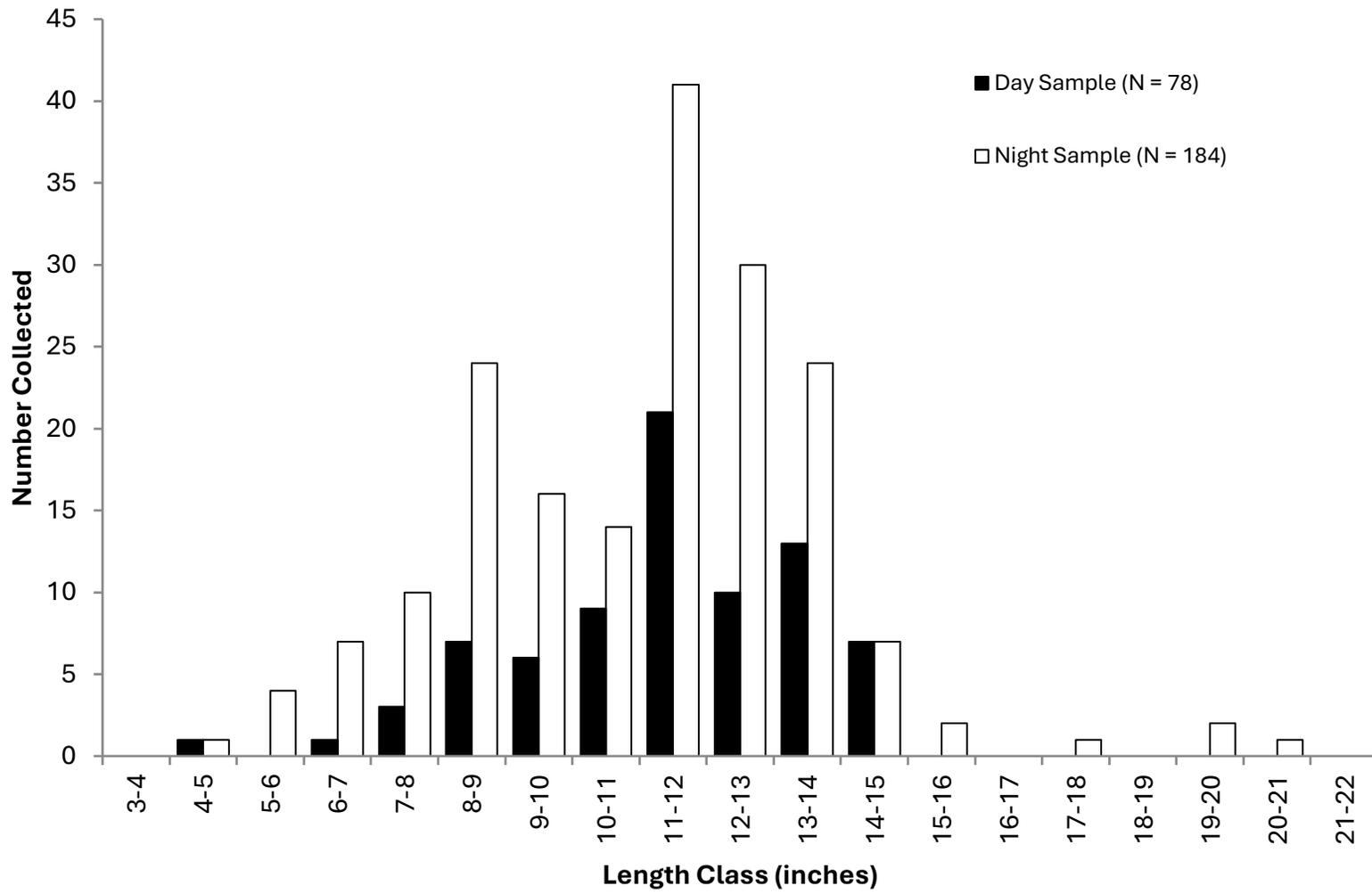


Figure 1. Length distribution of Largemouth Bass collected throughout Ragged Mountain Reservoir in 2025.

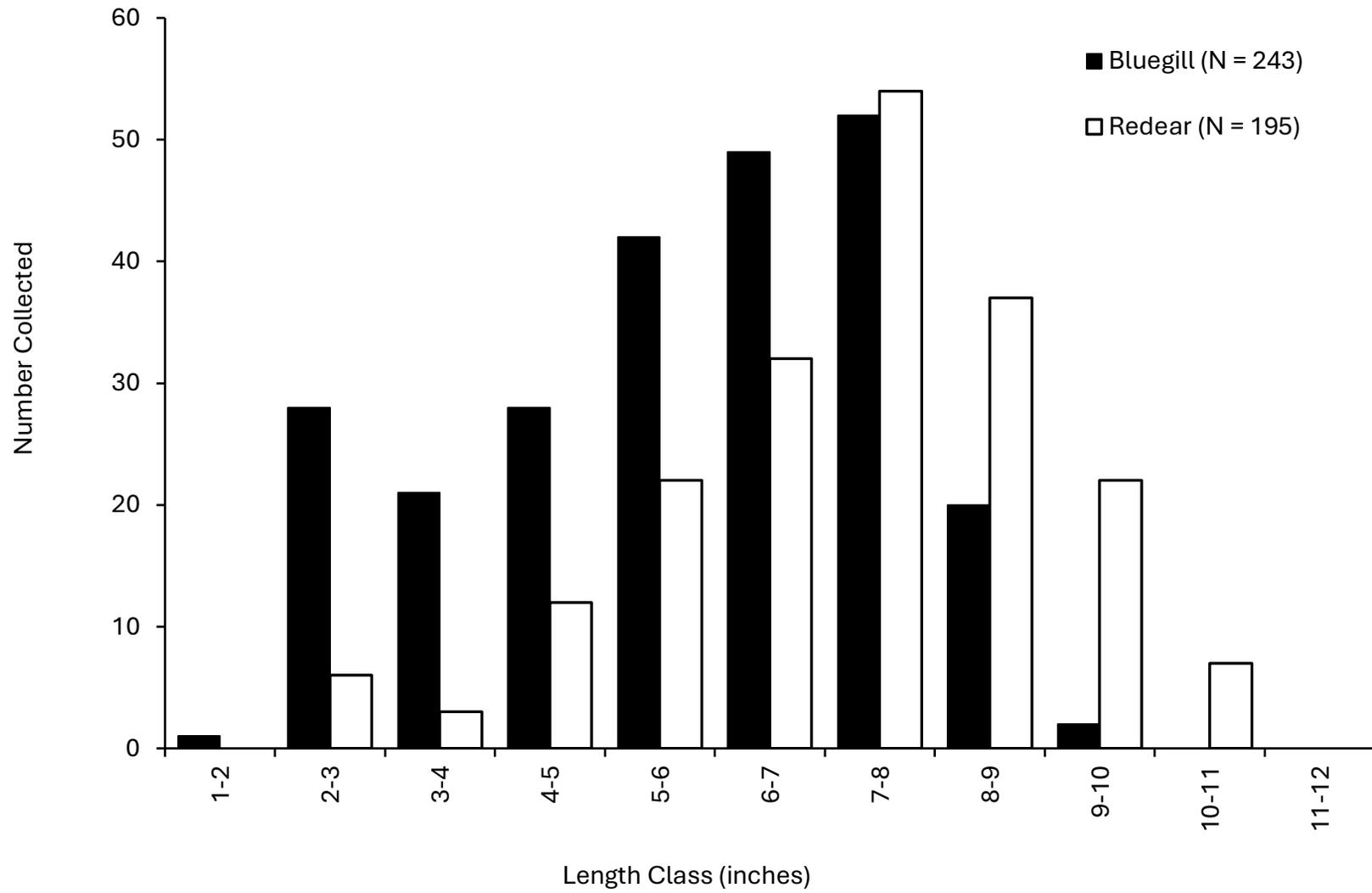


Figure 2. Length distribution of Bluegill and Redear sunfish collected throughout Ragged Mountain Reservoir in 2025.

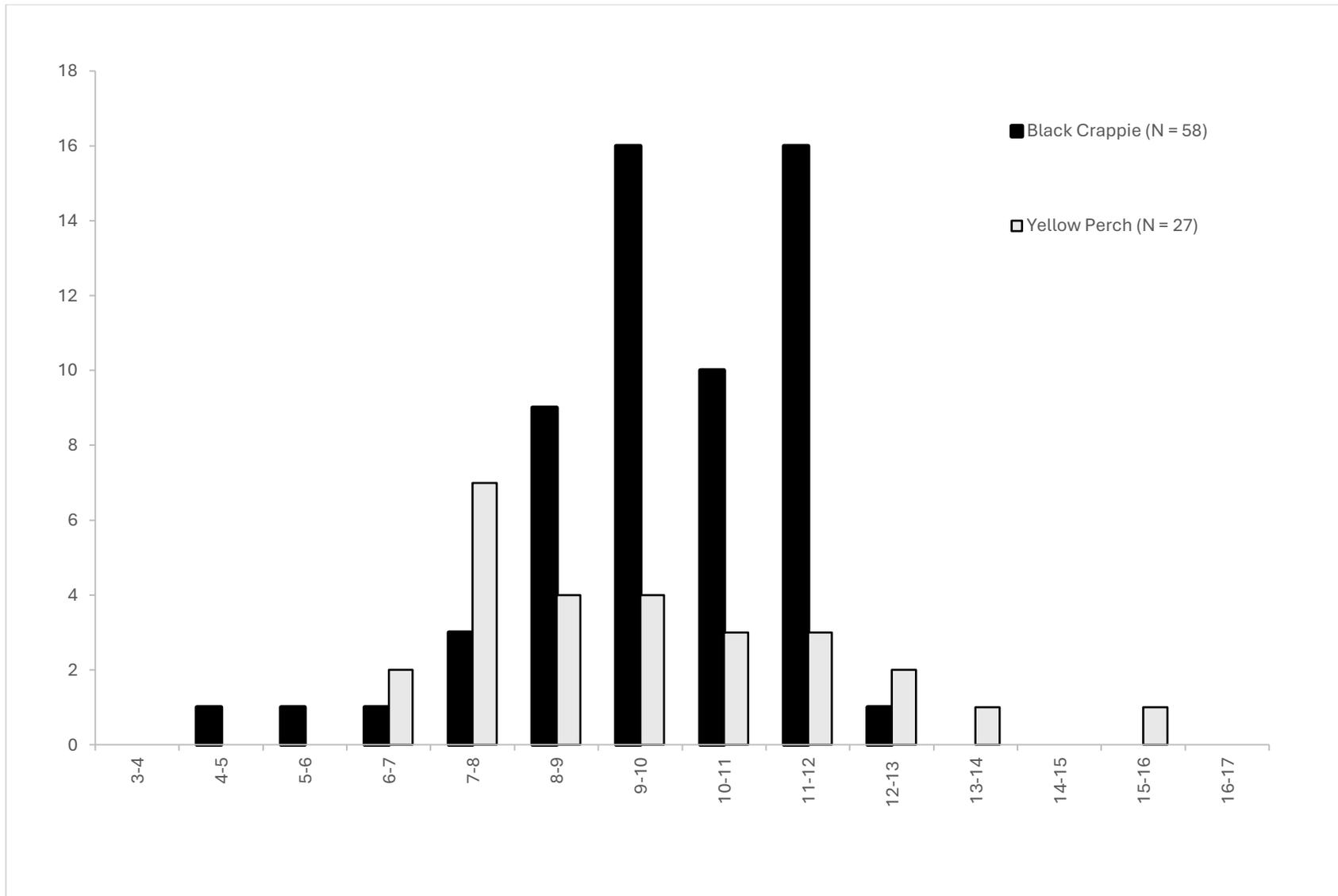


Figure 3. Length distribution of Black Crappie and Yellow Perch collected throughout Ragged Mountain Reservoir in 2025.