



Sleeter Lake Management Report

Popular Report

Federal Aid Project – F111R

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Robbie Willis, Assistant Fisheries Biologist

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources

1320 Belman Road

Fredericksburg, VA 22401

Sleeter Lake is 101-acre impoundment located in the town of Round Hill in Loudoun County. Public access opened in August of 2018 and is offered through the Sleeter Lake Park. The 11-acre park offers picnic areas with tables and grills, canoe and kayak storage, a soft-launch boat ramp (lake bank) and plenty of shoreline for bank fishing. Boats must be 18 feet or less and can only use electric motors. Sleeter Lake Park is open daily at 7 a.m. from March 1st through the last Sunday in November. Closing times vary throughout the season and can be found at <https://www.roundhillva.org/sleeter-lake-park>, along with park rules and regulations. If you are locked in the park, call (703) 777-1021.

Sleeter Lake has been surveyed twice since opening, most recently in May of 2023. It will be sampled every 4-5 years by electrofishing (EF) to get an accurate picture of the fisheries status. Electrofishing is an active sampling method used to determine abundance, density, and species composition of fish populations. The 2023 survey resulted in an abundant catch of Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Black Crappie, Redear Sunfish, Pumpkinseed and Bullhead. Channel Catfish are stocked annually at 10/acre, not susceptible to the EF gear used they often do not get sampled in the survey.

Abundance is usually described as a catch rate in number of fish per hour (CPUE, or Catch per Unit Effort). Biologists employ numerical descriptors of length-frequency data such as Proportional Size Distribution (PSD) and Proportional Size Distribution –Preferred (PSD-P) when evaluating fish populations. PSD is calculated by dividing the (number of fish \geq minimum quality length by the number of fish \geq minimum stock length) x 100. Quality length is defined as the minimum size of fish most anglers like to catch (12” for Largemouth Bass). Stock length is the minimum length at which a fish provides recreational value and/or is recruited to the fishery (8” for Largemouth Bass). PSD-P is the percentage of preferred length group found within a

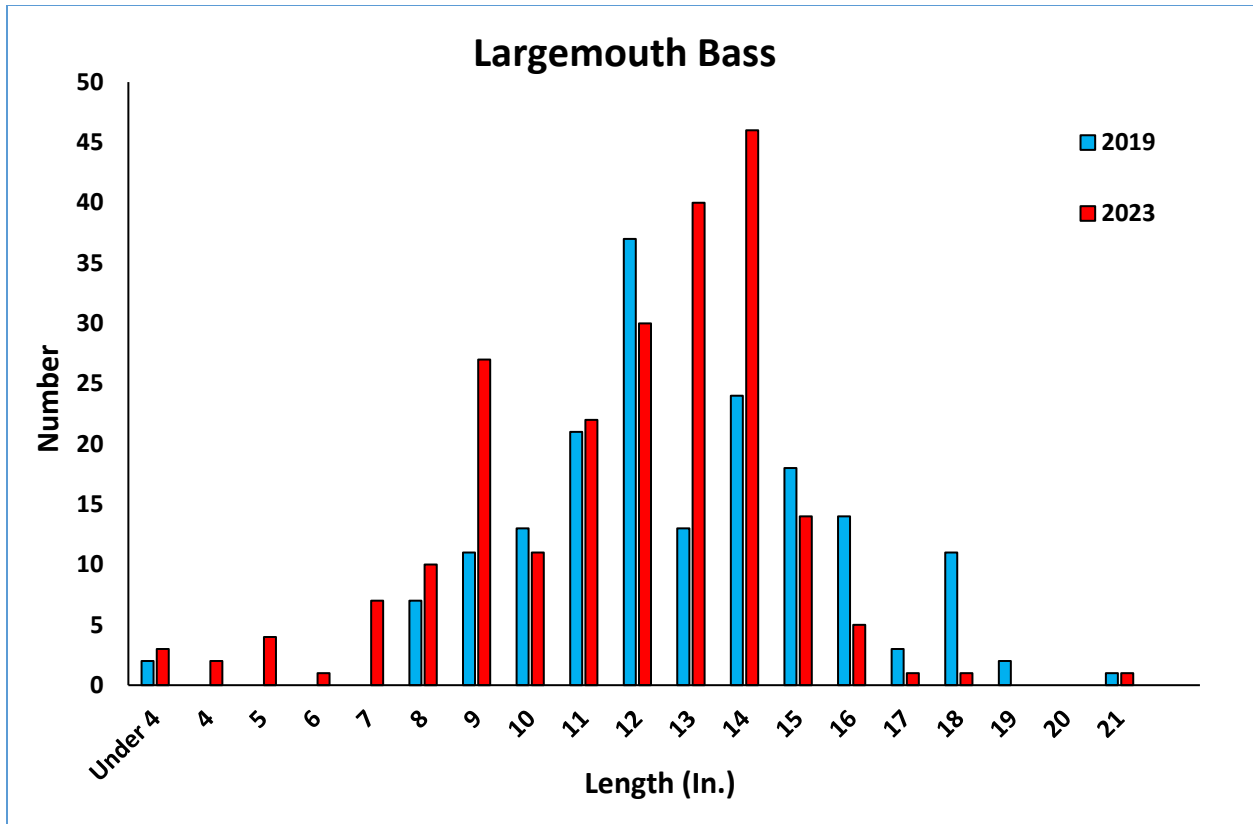
population. It is calculated by dividing the (number of fish \geq preferred length by the number of fish \geq minimum stock length) x 100. Preferred bass are those 15” or larger, while memorable bass are those 20” or larger.

State standard regulations apply to the harvest of most game and nongame fish. Anglers are also encouraged to keep Black Crappie (25 per day). Channel Catfish regulations allow anglers to keep 8 per day with a 15 inch minimum.

Largemouth Bass

The 2023 electrofishing sample produced 225 Largemouth Bass. The population size structure of Largemouth Bass (LMB) in 2023 was very similar previous sample in 2019, as PSD slightly decreased to 74 from 77. A PSD of 40-70 is indicative of a balanced bass population. Proportional Size Distribution of “preferred” fish (PSD-P; ratio of adults greater than 15”) was lower in 2023 (19) as compared to 31 in 2019. This was due to an increase in smaller fish as a result of recent strong year classes, which should grow into the “preferred” size group and should be present in the next survey. Total catch per unit effort (CPUE) of LMB decreased to 225 fish/hr in 2023 (which is still very high) from 266 fish/hr in 2019. CPUE of preferred size bass (>15”) decreased from 83/hr (2019) to 38/hr in 2023. The CPUE of memorable size bass (20”) decreased from 3/hr to 2/hr. Length distribution ranged from 3 to 22”, with a large proportion 10 to 15” suggesting desirable size structure. Largely because the rules state releasing all bass 11-14", harvesting fish less then 14” would help the size structure. Sleeter Lake currently ranks 6th out of 18 impoundments managed in the district for catch rate of preferred bass.

Anglers may harvest five bass per day but are encouraged to practice catch and release on larger bass, as their value to the fishery can provide enjoyment for many others and contribute to the spawning stock.

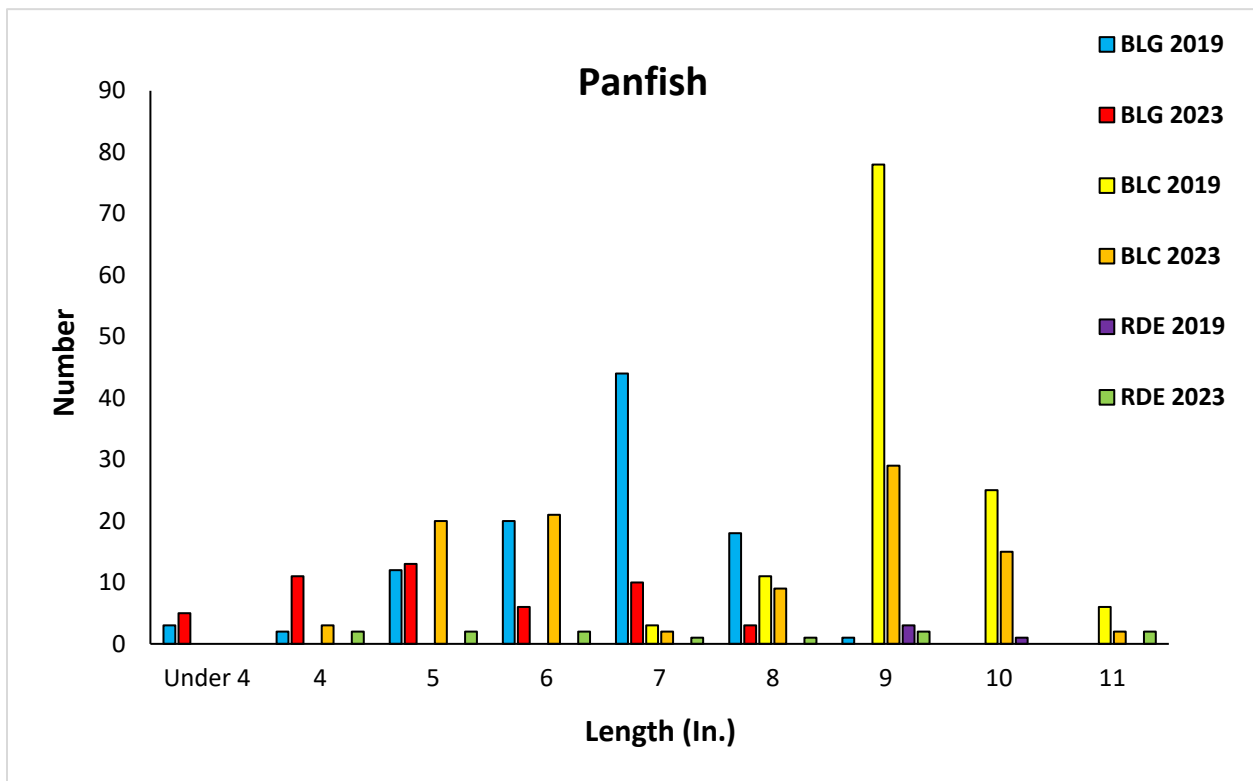


Panfish

Sleeter Lake has a good population of Black Crappie (BLC). Electrofishing CPUE decreased in 2023, however still had a good catch rate of 102 fish/hr. The length distribution ranged from 8 to 11” in 2019, while the fish in the 2023 sample were 4 – 13”. Black Crappie PSD was 57, indicative of a balanced fishery. Panfish fisheries are typically considered balanced when PSD falls in the range of 20 – 60. Crappie populations are known to fluctuate due to high annual variation in spawning success, and while not a positive sign for crappie anglers; reduced abundance of this species in this predator heavy community can be viewed beneficially. Crappie are predominately piscivorous and can compete with bass exacerbating poor growth and suboptimal size structure for both species especially in smaller, less productive lakes. Anglers

are encouraged to harvest any crappie caught up to the 25-fish/day limit. Black Crappie can be found in areas with cover, such as tree limbs and brush piles in clear water near structure.

Bluegill (BLG) electrofishing CPUE was 48/hr in 2023, a decrease from 2019. Bluegill PSD was 53 and Redear sunfish was 42, suggesting both currently have balanced populations. Electrofishing data indicated most BLG and RDE were 4 to 8 inches. There is no size limit on sunfish (Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, Pumpkinseed, etc.), and anglers may harvest 50 sunfish (combined) per day.



Additional Fish Species

Sleeter Lake continues to get stocked annually with Channel Catfish at 10 fish/acre. Channel Catfish were not observed during both the 2019 and 2023 surveys; however they are not overly vulnerable to standard electrofishing gear and are likely present. The current fish

community also includes populations of Pumpkinseed, Yellow Bullhead, Brown Bullhead and White Sucker.

Sleeter Lake has a primitive launch from the bank that is good for kayaks, canoes, and smaller boats with trolling motors. There is also good access for shore fishing at Sleeter Lake Park. The address for the park is 17749 Lakefield Rd., Round Hill, VA 2014. To access the lake, take Route 7 business (W Loudoun St) through Round Hill, turn right onto Lakefield Rd. and follow that to the park.

For more information about Sleeter Lake:

Visit the Sleeter Lake Park website (www.roundhillva.org/sleeter-lake-park)

or

Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (www.dwr.virginia.gov)

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540-899-4169