



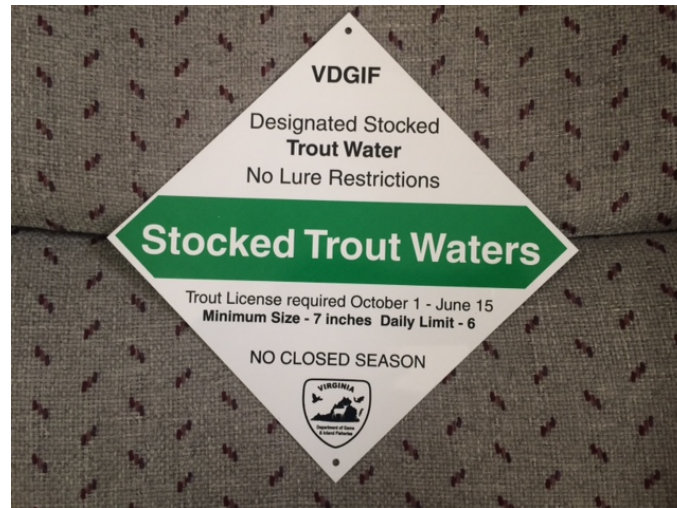
2021 Smith River Fisheries Report



The Smith River in Henry County is one of the state's most unique fisheries. The cold water released from Philpott Dam provides miles of quality trout water and offers excellent fishing opportunities throughout the year. Approximately 31 miles from Philpott Dam downstream to State Route 636 (Mitchell Bridge) are managed by the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (VDWR) as brown trout special regulation waters. Brown trout from 10 to 24 inches are protected and must be released. Anglers fishing this section should be aware that water levels rise and flows increase as water is released from Philpott Dam. Information about the daily generation schedule for Philpott Dam can be obtained by calling (276) 629-2432. The following regulation sign is posted throughout this 31 mile section of the Smith River.



Within the 31 mile special regulation section, there are two areas designated as stocked trout waters. These put-and-take stocked trout areas provide opportunities for anglers to catch rainbow and brook trout. The first area, identified as “Smith River Upper” starts at Philpott Dam and continues downstream approximately 3.3 miles to the confluence with Town Creek. This area is classified by VDWR as a “Category B Stocked Trout Water”, and is stocked with rainbow trout 5 times from October 1st through June 15th. The second stocked trout area, identified as “Smith River Lower”, is classified as “Category A Stocked Trout Waters”. It begins in North Bassett and continues downstream approximately 9.5 miles to below Fieldale. It is stocked with rainbow trout 8 times from October 1st through June 15th. Both stocked trout areas require a stocked trout license in addition to a state freshwater fishing license. Designated stocked trout areas of the Smith River display signs like the one below.



Downstream of the special regulation section, anglers can expect to catch smallmouth bass, rock bass, and sunfish as the Smith makes its way into North Carolina.

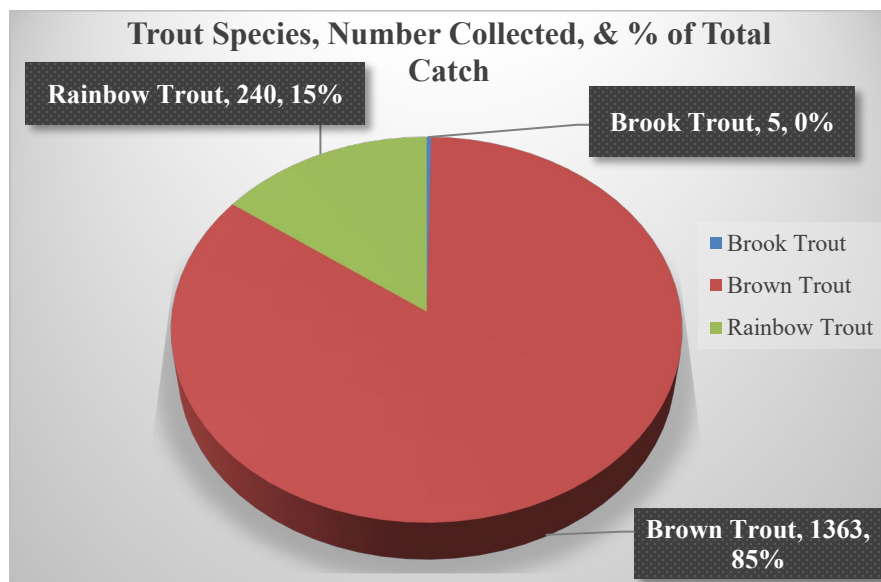


The following report summarizes the results of fish population sampling by the VDWR in 2020. The Department, in conjunction with the Smith River Chapter of Trout Unlimited collects fish population data annually to assess the health and status of the brown trout fishery. Routine population monitoring has been conducted since the mid 1990's.

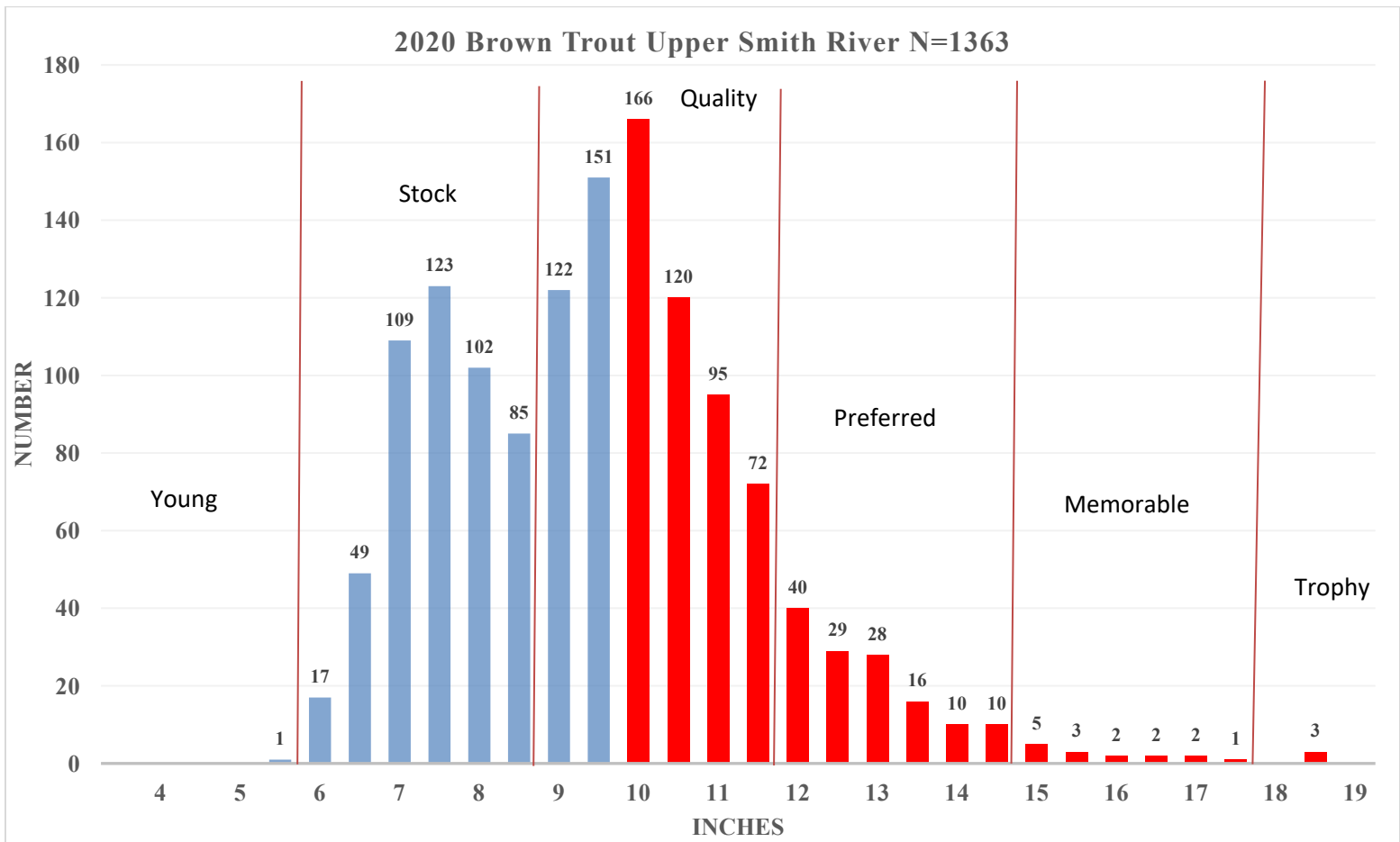


Philpott Dam to Martinsville Dam

In 2020 routine fish sampling in the upper Smith River between Philpott and Martinsville dams 1,608 trout were collected. Brook trout were the fewest in numbers with only 5 collected. Rainbow trout were more numerous with 240 individuals sampled and brown trout were the most abundant with 1,363 individuals collected in three sampling events. Brook and rainbow trout are stocked and brown trout are naturally reproducing.



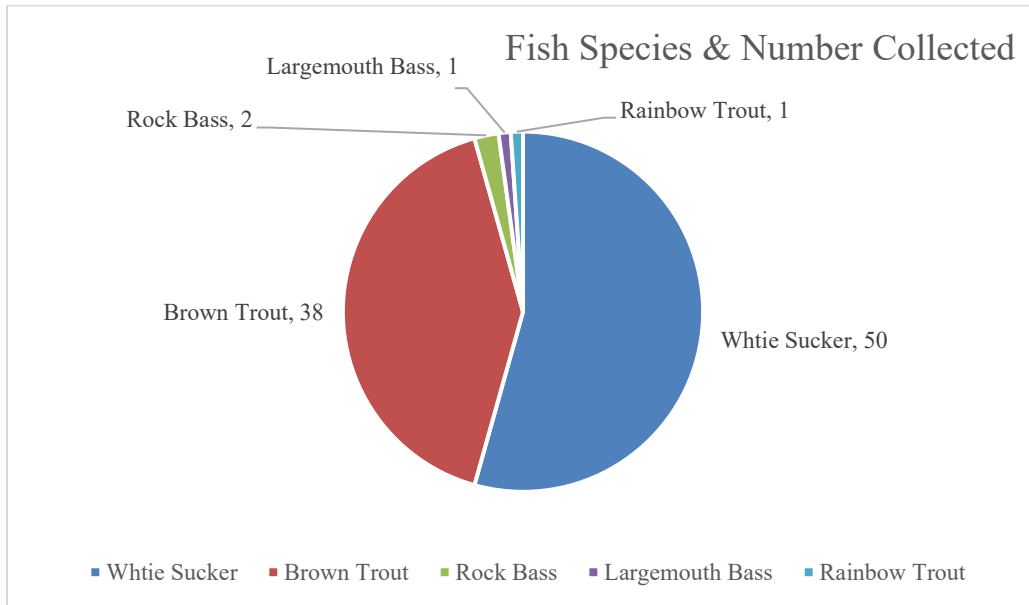
Brown trout comprised 85% of trout species collected with sizes of brown trout collected ranging from 5-19 inches. Brown trout less than 5 inches were considered juvenile and only one was collected in the sample. Adult brown trout from the sample averaged 9.5 inches. Anglers fishing this section of the Smith River can expect to catch brown trout in the 6-15 inch range. The following chart shows the number of brown trout collected by inch group in 2020. There are good numbers of “Quality” sized (9-12 inch) brown trout for anglers to catch.



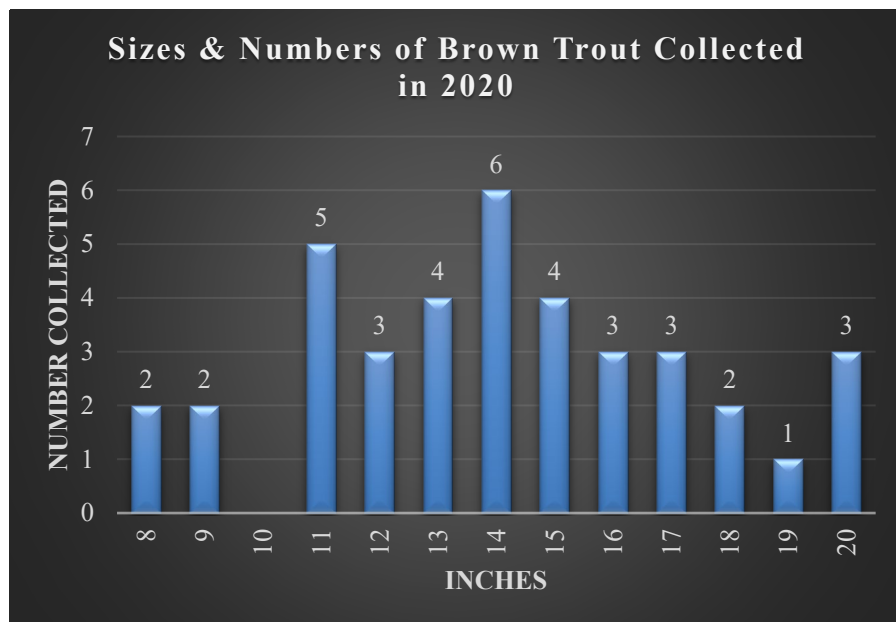
Martinsville Dam to Mitchell Bridge

The Smith River below Martinsville Dam is different from the river above the dam. First and most noticeable is water temperature. Water temperature coming out of Philpott Dam is cold because it comes from the lower parts of the reservoir. As the water flows away from the dam it warms up. By the time it reaches Martinsville Dam about 19 miles downstream the water has warmed significantly. In the summer months, the water temperatures below Martinsville Dam are border-line for supporting trout in some locations. As the water temperature increases, the fish community shifts from trout to a warm/cool water species composition such as smallmouth bass, rock bass and sunfish. The trout section below Martinsville Dam is approximately 11 miles in length, with few

access points and deep pools with steep banks. The following chart shows the species and numbers of some of the more common fish collected in this reach.



White suckers and brown trout were the most abundant fish species collected making up a majority of all species collected. A total of 38 brown trout were collected. Brown trout abundance decreased traveling downstream away from Martinsville Dam. The brown trout population below Martinsville Dam is fewer in number than the population above Martinsville Dam however, average size increases. Brown trout sizes below Martinsville Dam ranged between 8-20 inches and averaged 14 inches. The following chart shows the size distribution of brown trout collected below Martinsville Dam in 2020.



Very little natural reproduction of brown trout has been identified in the Smith River below Martinsville Dam. Most of the brown trout in this section are from above the dam, having been washed down, relocated from sites in the upper Smith River or stocked by the Department. In the past, the Department relocated about 3,000 brown trout from sampling sites below Philpott Dam where trout densities are high, to locations below Martinsville Dam where densities are low. In 2019-2020, approximately 20,000 fingerling brown trout were stocked to enhance the trout population. This section provides great diversity in fish species and good sizes of brown trout. Recently, anglers are reporting catching nice sized brown trout in this reach.



Brown trout in the Smith River below Martinsville Dam grow at faster rates than brown trout above Martinsville Dam. The difference in growth rates is directly related to the amount of food available for them. A study of brown trout diets showed what the brown trout below Martinsville Dam were eating. Stomach content from 155 adult brown trout showed that diets consisted of crayfish, minnows, snails, and insects during the summer period.



The Smith River provides great trout fishing all year and has much to offer all anglers. Success of the fishery involves anglers following regulations (size and creel limits), conservation officers enforcing fishing laws and biologists working with stakeholders, user groups and concerned citizens to formulate plans that benefit the fisheries and users of the aquatic resources. Anglers who would like to get involved in working to improve and enhance the Smith River trout fisheries are encouraged to contact the Smith River Trout Unlimited Chapter. Their web address is <http://www.smithrivertu.com/> or Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/SmithRiverTU> , check the page for links to river flow information and other helpful information.

For more information on the fishery, contact George Palmer by telephone (434) 525-7522 or by email george.palmer@dwr.virginia.gov