



Lake Orange 2009

Lake Orange is a 124-acre Department-owned public fishing lake in Orange County that was impounded in 1964 and opened to fishing in 1967. The lake is located a few miles east of Orange, VA and offers a scenic setting surrounded by gently rolling farmland and hardwood forests. Access to the lake is off of the main lake peninsula on the western side where the boat ramp, concession, fishing pier, parking lot, picnic facilities and plenty of great shoreline access can be found.

Lake Orange supports a typical warmwater fish community of largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie, channel catfish, chain pickerel, and walleye. Northern pike have been stocked occasionally over the last decade, and a limited fishery exists. Walleye, chain pickerel, and channel catfish are stocked on a regular basis to provide anglers with good fishing action. Lake Orange is fertilized annually, as the added nutrients increase the lake's productivity and angler catch.

Lake Orange became known for producing the world record white bass of 6 pounds 13 ounces in 1989. How white bass were introduced into Lake Orange is still a mystery, as they were never officially stocked. Illegal angler introduction or accidental hatchery stocking are two possible answers. The population number of white bass is not accurately known, but biologists believe it to be very small if existing at all. Gizzard shad were first documented in Lake Orange sometime in the mid-1990's, and the population is now well established. The main target species at Lake Orange are black crappie and largemouth bass. Yellow perch, white perch, warmouth and common carp also provide some action. The largemouth bass fishing is excellent at Lake Orange. There are numerous bass in the 10 to 12 inch size range with trophy bass up to 24 inches available.

DGIF fisheries biologists sample the fishery approximately every 3-5 years. Most recently, an electrofishing sample was conducted in May 2008. The 2008 electrofishing sample by Department fisheries biologists produced 143 largemouth bass/hour of sampling. The data revealed the CPE-P to be 14. CPE-P is the index used in analyzing sample catch rates. It stands for the "catch per effort of preferred fish." The CPE-P for LMB is the number of bass 15 inches or larger that are collected in one hour of electrofishing. Based on CPE-P, Lake Orange is ranked 14th out of 18 popular northern VA impoundments sampled by VDGIF biologists in the spring of 2005-2008. Biologists employ numerical descriptors of length-frequency data such as Proportional Stock Density (PSD) and Relative Stock Density (RSD) when evaluating fish populations. Proportional Stock Density 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. Stock length is the minimum length at which a fish provides recreational value. Relative Stock Density (RSD) is simply the percentage of any designated length group found within a population. RSD is calculated by dividing the number of fish \geq specified length by the number of fish \geq minimum stock length x 100. Largemouth bass stock density values were indicative of a quality fishery (PSD 64, RSD-P 10, RSD-M 1).

Lake Orange has a 16-22 inch slot limit on largemouth bass, which means that fish 16 to 22 inches in length must be released. Anglers may harvest 5 bass per day, but only one bass may be larger than 22 inches. The slot limit allows for harvest of the abundant smaller bass, while promoting the protection of larger bass to a trophy size. The 2008 Lake Orange creel survey revealed anglers caught and released 2,409 largemouth bass. Anglers harvested 148 bass with the average weight being 1.5 pounds. In terms of overall success for largemouth bass, March and September were the best months for bass fishing.

Lake Orange bass feed heavily upon the schools of gizzard shad. The abundance of shad in the lake has made fishing for bass a little more difficult. Anglers should try using crankbaits and other artificial lures that resemble a shad pattern and shape. Jigging spoons through schools of bass feeding on shad is a pattern anglers can try. A good fish finder will allow for finding schools of shad.

The Lake Orange crappie fishery is healthy and abundant. Creel surveys have been conducted at Lake Orange over the years with angler species preference being recorded. Black crappie and largemouth bass have been the most sought after species. Black crappie were collected by trap nets in March 2005 for an exploitation study to evaluate angler harvest under the 9-inch minimum size restriction implemented in 2004. Black crappie were the dominant species caught during the 2008 creel survey. Harvest by number was 1,696 fish with an overall yield of 764 pounds of crappie (average weight was 0.4 pounds) and a mean length of almost 10 inches.

Lake Orange offers a decent walleye fishery. Lake Orange was initially stocked with walleye in 1977. The lake has been stocked annually (except 1983, 1993-1995) at a rate of 50 walleye/acre. Stocked walleye usually measure about 1.5 inches in length. Due to the difficulty and cost of raising walleye to larger size in hatcheries, biologists have decided to stock higher numbers of small fingerlings in hopes they will survive to keep the fishery successful. Anglers who actively target walleye have some success with catches of fish in the 3 to 5 pound range not uncommon.

Channel catfish have done very well at Lake Orange and are the second most abundant species harvested at the lake. Channel catfish have been stocked since the lake was first impounded in 1964. The lake has been stocked annually since 1986 (except 1996 and 2000) and the current stocking rate of 10/acre produces numerous catfish in the 2-pound plus range. In 2008, anglers harvested 780 catfish for a yield of 1,596 pounds. The average weight of harvested catfish was 2.0 pounds.

Bluegills are abundant with fish averaging in the 6 – 7 inch size range, but the bluegill fishery has suffered the impact of the gizzard shad introduction and proliferation and very few trophy fish are available. Gizzard shad have fully established themselves in Lake Orange and as a result largemouth bass are feeding heavily upon the shad and less on the bluegill. This switch in the food chain allows for increased numbers of bluegill surviving to spawn, producing greater year classes of bluegill. The biomass of bluegill over the course of time, if not thinned out by predators or angler harvest, will lean toward slower growth and smaller size, a stunted population. Anglers are encouraged to harvest bluegill.

Lake Orange provides numerous facilities with a concession that provides boat rental, bait and tackle. Picnic facilities of a shelter, tables and grills make for an enjoyable family outing. The lake is open year round and 24 hours a day for shore fishing and for private boats. The concession is open from mid-March through mid-October, however; the other facilities are open all year. The boat ramp is located on the right side of the peninsula in the protected cove. The fishing pier is a popular spot for handicapped and shore-bound anglers to try their luck.

Several fish attractor reefs have been installed around the lake to help concentrate fish in areas accessible to anglers. Fish reefs are marked by buoys throughout the lake. Additionally, fish reefs have been suspended under the new fishing pier. Christmas trees were sunk with attached concrete blocks and marker buoys placed to mark the location. The black crappie and sunfish should find the added habitat to their liking.

Lake Orange can be reached by taking Route 629 off of either Route 20 or Route 522, depending on where you are traveling from. Signs for Lake Orange are posted as to where to turn. Travel on Route 629 until you see Route 739. Route 739 will take you to the peninsula located in the middle section of Lake Orange.

For more information on Lake Orange, please contact:

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or

Angler's Landing at Lake Orange
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