



Powhatan Ponds 2009

Located in the Powhatan Wildlife Management Area (WMA), the Powhatan ponds are a series of three small impoundments that are a combined total of 20 surface acres. The ponds lay in a series from west to east; the farthest western lying ponds is the bass pond followed by the bullhead pond then the sunfish pond. The bass and sunfish ponds have primitive boat launches while the bullhead pond requires a short walk (~ 100 yards) to access. Each pond offers ample shoreline fishing opportunities and has a typical fish community for a small Central Virginia pond (largemouth bass, sunfish, and channel catfish). During April, 2008 the fish communities of the Powhatan ponds were sampled by boat electrofishing gear. This report summarizes the results of these surveys and what anglers can expect to catch in the Powhatan Ponds.

A combined total of seven fish species were collected from the three Powhatan Ponds (Table 1). Largemouth bass and bluegill were by far the most abundant species collected in each pond (Table 1), and the catch rates for both species were very high for such small water bodies. The largemouth bass populations of each pond are very poor in terms of the size of bass available to anglers. Each pond is dominated by small bass (< 12 inches, Figure 1), and on average these small bass were very skinny. The poor condition of these small bass is likely due to overcrowding of bass in the smaller size-classes. To reduce the stockpiling of small bass in the sunfish pond, bass between 4 and 12 inches were collected and removed from the pond in the fall of 2008. These fish were stocked in the bass pond to create a high density, kid friendly bass fishery.

Anglers searching for harvestable-sized bass should concentrate efforts on the bullhead and sunfish ponds. A few larger bass (> 15 inches) were collected in these two ponds but not in the bass pond. The largest bass collected was from the sunfish pond and measures 23.5 inches and weighed 7.5 pounds. The sunfish pond has the highest potential for anglers to catch a memorable or trophy bass because of its larger size and suitable bass habitat. Additionally, the removal of small bass from the sunfish pond should reduce overcrowding and help increase the growth of bass in the pond. Novice anglers and kids searching for fast action should target the high density bass fishery in the bass pond. The chance of catching a large bass in this pond is fairly low but catch rates should be very high.

Anglers searching for panfish should have high catch success for fish at each of the ponds, due to high abundances of bluegill and redear sunfish (Table 1). A small number of black crappie were collected in bass and bullhead ponds but catches of crappie were fairly uncommon. Crappie are not desired in small impoundments like the Powhatan Ponds because of the species tendency to overpopulate and stunt. Bluegill and redear populations were dominated by smaller individuals (< 7 inches, Figure 3). No panfish above 9 inches were collected in any of the ponds. At this time, the best panfish fishery, in terms of the size of fish, appears to be in the sunfish pond. The sunfish pond had the highest percentage panfish in the 6 to 9 inch size classes (Figure

3). The panfish population in the bass pond should improve with the stocking of small bass from the sunfish pond. These bass should prey on small panfish, reduce their high numbers and improving panfish growth. Additionally, the feasibility of installing fish feeder in each pond to increase sunfish growth will be examined. Anglers searching for panfish should fish around the brush piles and beaver huts with crickets, worm, or small twister-tailed grubs.

Channel catfish offer anglers a different variety of fishing experience. Catch rates for channel catfish were low in the bass and bullhead pond but were surprisingly higher in the sunfish pond (Table 1). Catfish often frequent deeper water making them more difficult to catch with electrofishing gear. All catfish collected were larger than 12 inches with the largest collected measuring greater than 23 inches. Catchable-sized channel catfish are stocked annually and should be easy to catch on some form of live or stink bait.

The Powhatan Ponds receive very little fishing pressure and offer fishing locations that are off the beaten path. If you are looking for a peaceful day on the water, you should visit the Powhatan Ponds. Small boats with trolling motors are ideal for fishing each Pond. The ponds can be accessed from the entrance to the Powhatan WMA off Route 627.

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Table 1. Catch rates for fish collected from the Powhatan WMA Ponds in 2008.

Species	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)		
	Bass Pond	Bullhead Pond	Sunfish Pond
American Eel	None	8	21
Black Crappie	31	24	None
Bluegill	115	195	147
Channel Catfish	9	4	27
Largemouth Bass	121	155	142
Redear Sunfish	53	89	25
Warmouth	None	None	4

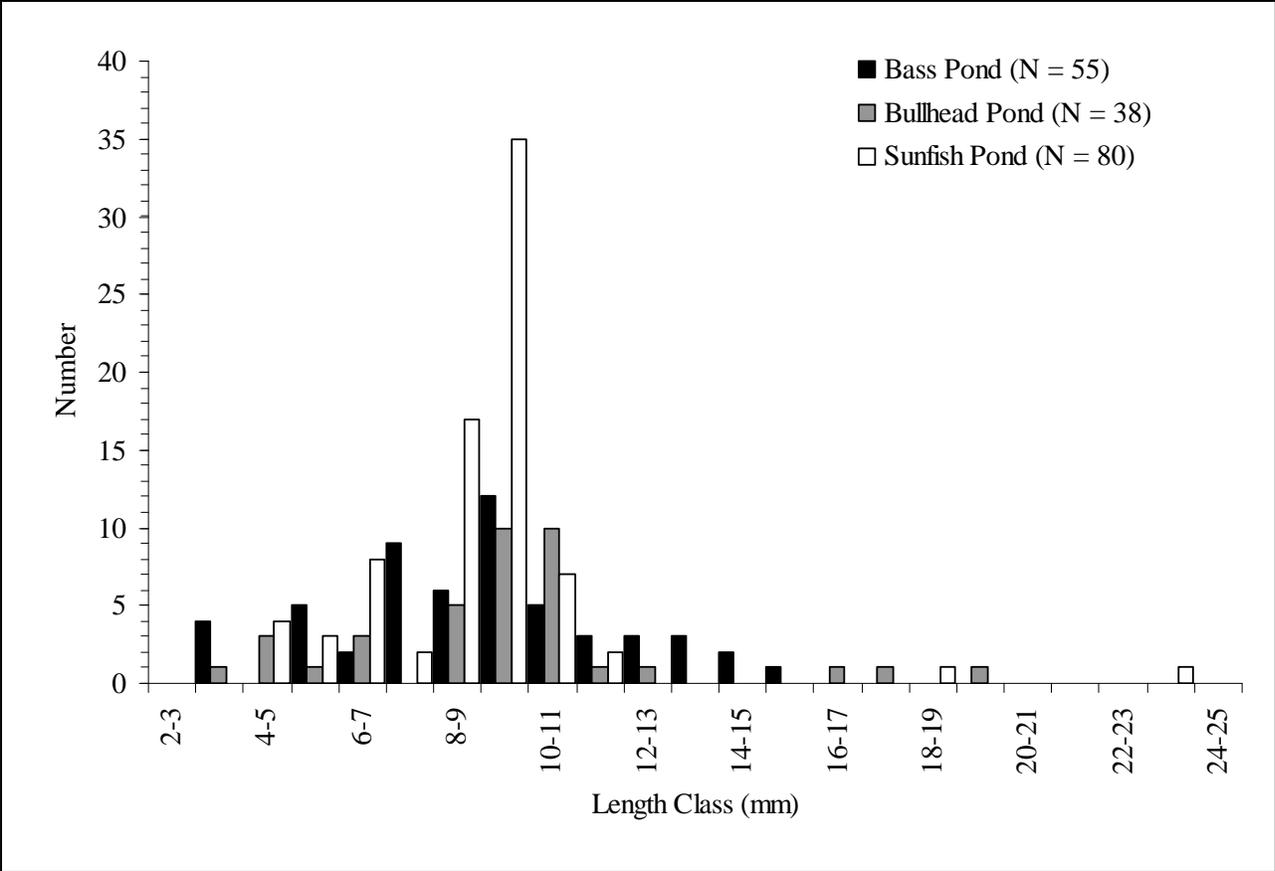


Figure 1. Length distribution of largemouth bass collected from the Powhatan WMA Ponds in 2008.

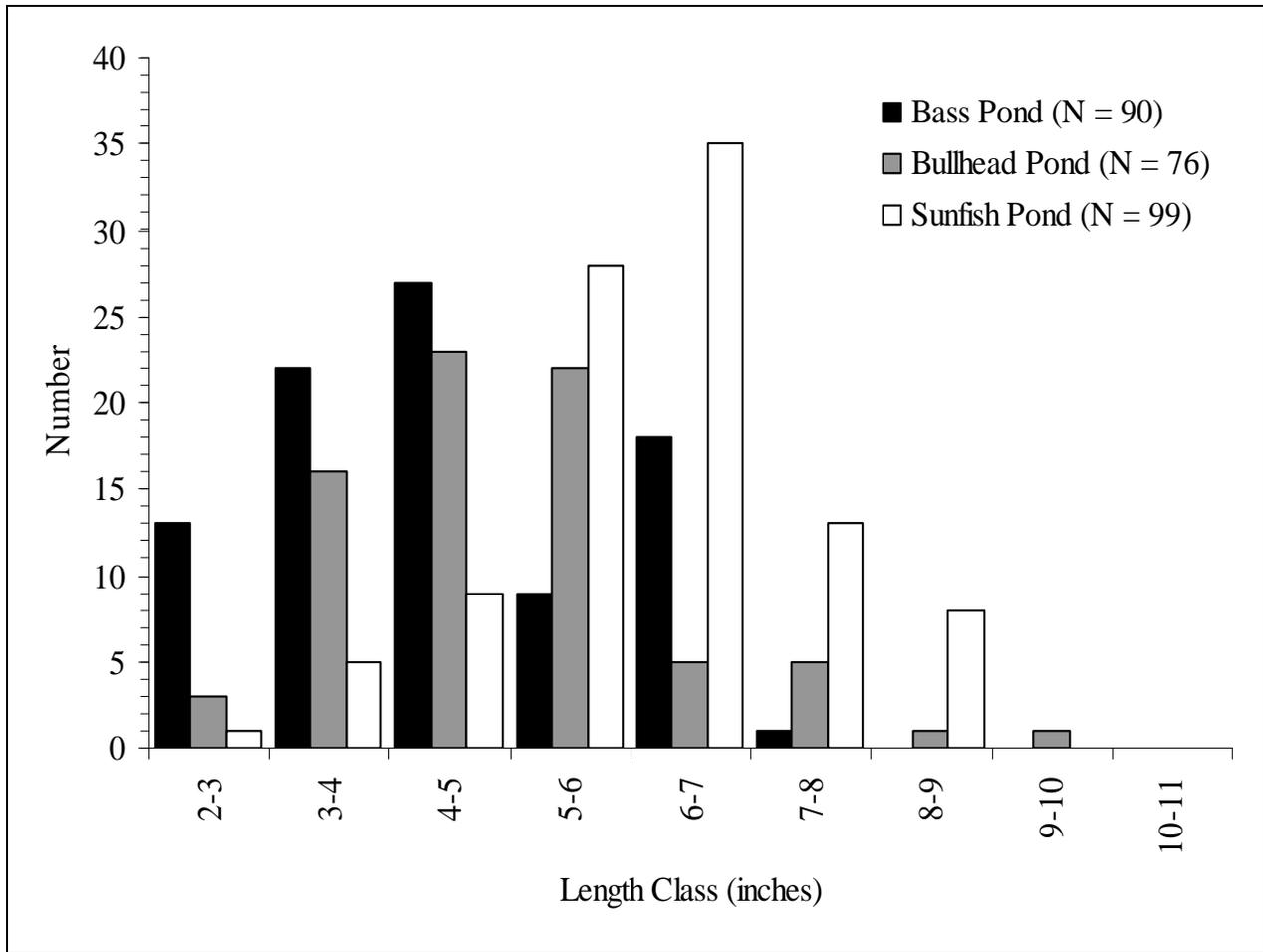


Figure 3. Length distribution of panfish collected throughout the Powhatan WMA Ponds in 2008. Panfish include bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie, and warmouth sunfish.