



Albemarle Lake 2012



Albemarle Lake is a 35-acre impoundment built by the Civilian Conservation Corp. in 1938. The lake was one of the first public lakes in Albemarle County when it was purchased by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The lake was originally stocked with many different fish species but currently the lake contains self-sustaining populations of largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie, and bullhead catfish. Additionally, the lake is annually stocked with channel catfish. In 2012, the fish community of Albemarle Lake was sampled by boat electrofishing and trapnets. This report summarizes the results of these surveys and what anglers can expect to catch in Albemarle Lake.

A total of eleven fish species were collected in the 2012 surveys (Table 1). Largemouth bass and bluegill were the most abundant species collected in the electrofishing survey while bluegill and redear sunfish were the most abundant species collected in the trapnet survey (Table 1). Lake Albemarle's bass population has changed dramatically since the quality bass fishery observed in 2008. Currently, the lake's bass fishery is dominated by small (< 13 inches), skinny individuals (Figure 1) and shows signs of a stunted population. Anglers should harvest as many of these small bass as legally possible (note: 5 bass per day creel limit for Virginia) to improve bass growth and to alleviate the stunting problem. The lake still contains some quality bass, but anglers will have to work to catch them. The largest bass collected measured 23 inches and weighed 8 lbs. Small bass can be caught along the shoreline throughout the lake especially along shoreline areas with fallen timber. Additionally, anglers should fish around the numerous fish attractors throughout the lake. The most prominent attractor is the old steel framed diving platform located near the boat launch.

Albemarle Lake continues to offer one of the best sunfish fisheries (bluegill and redear) for a small impoundment in Central Virginia. The electrofishing catch rate for sunfish was high with a large number of these fish being harvestable size (> 7 inches, Figure 2). The lake produces excellent numbers of sunfish between 8 to 10 inches; with the occasional sunfish over 11 inches (Figure 2). The abundance of larger sunfish offers a high potential for a trophy catch. Any serious sunfish anglers should give Albemarle Lake a visit. Sunfish can be found throughout the lake but the fallen trees around the shoreline and spawning flats just above and below the boat launch offer some of the best places to catch the big sunfish.

Albemarle Lake supports a marginal crappie fishery due to low population size. The catch rate was very low for Central Virginia with the catch composed primarily of black crappie. Although very few crappie were collected, the majority were large fish (> 9 inches, Figure 3). There was even one crappie collected that measured nearly 15 inches. Ninety two percent of crappie collected were younger than age-5, indicating a young population. These younger fish are exhibiting fast growth; on average crappie are approaching 10 inches by age-3 (Figure 4). Very fast growth, a low catch, and a young population indicate overexploitation of the crappie fishery. A 10-inch minimum size limit is recommended to allow young fast growing fish time to survive and reproduce. The recommended size limit should help maintain and grow the crappie fishery.

A small number of channel catfish and bullhead catfish were collected in the 2012 surveys. Little is known about the catfish population, because catfish often frequent deeper water making them more difficult to catch with electrofishing and trapnet gear. Albemarle Lake is open to catfish anglers after dark so there is plenty of opportunity for anglers to catch some bullheads or stocked channel catfish.

Anglers looking for a remote location to fish with numerous bass and an excellent sunfish fishery should visit Albemarle Lake. There is ample parking, a gravel ramp that accommodates most boats, and areas to fish from the shoreline. Gas powered motors are prohibited, but a good trolling motor will get you to any area of the lake.

For more information on Albemarle Lake, please contact:

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Table 1. Species account and catch rates for fish collected throughout Albemarle Lake in 2012.

Species	Electrofishing			Trapnets		
	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of Catch	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/net night)	Percentage of Catch
Black Crappie	20	16	4	37	0.9	14
Bluegill	162	132	34	99	2.5	38
Brown Bullhead	None	None	None	25	0.6	9
Channel Catfish	4	3	1	9	0.2	3
Golden Shiner	None	None	None	9	0.2	3
Largemouth Bass	276	225	58	2	0.1	1
Redear Sunfish	5	4	1	54	1.4	21
Warmouth	10	8	2	15	0.4	6
White Crappie	None	None	None	1	0.1	1
White Sucker	None	None	None	2	0.1	1
Yellow Bullhead	None	None	None	7	0.2	3

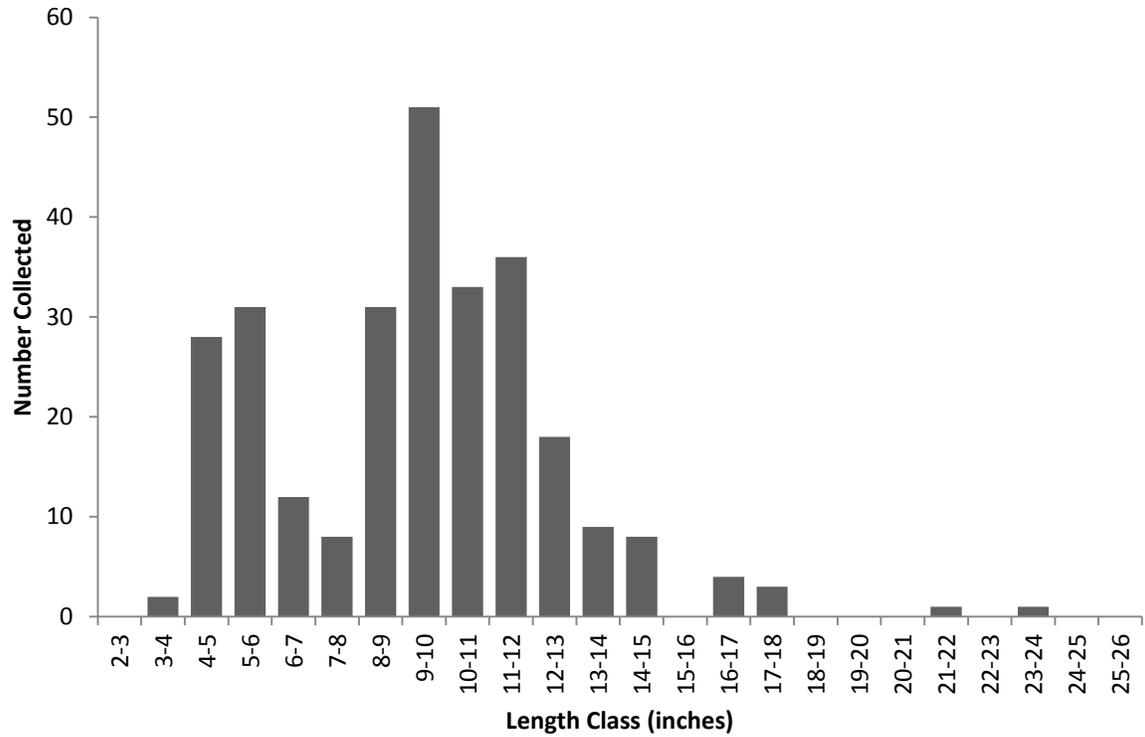


Figure 1. Length distribution of largemouth bass collected with electrofishing gear throughout Albemarle Lake in 2012.

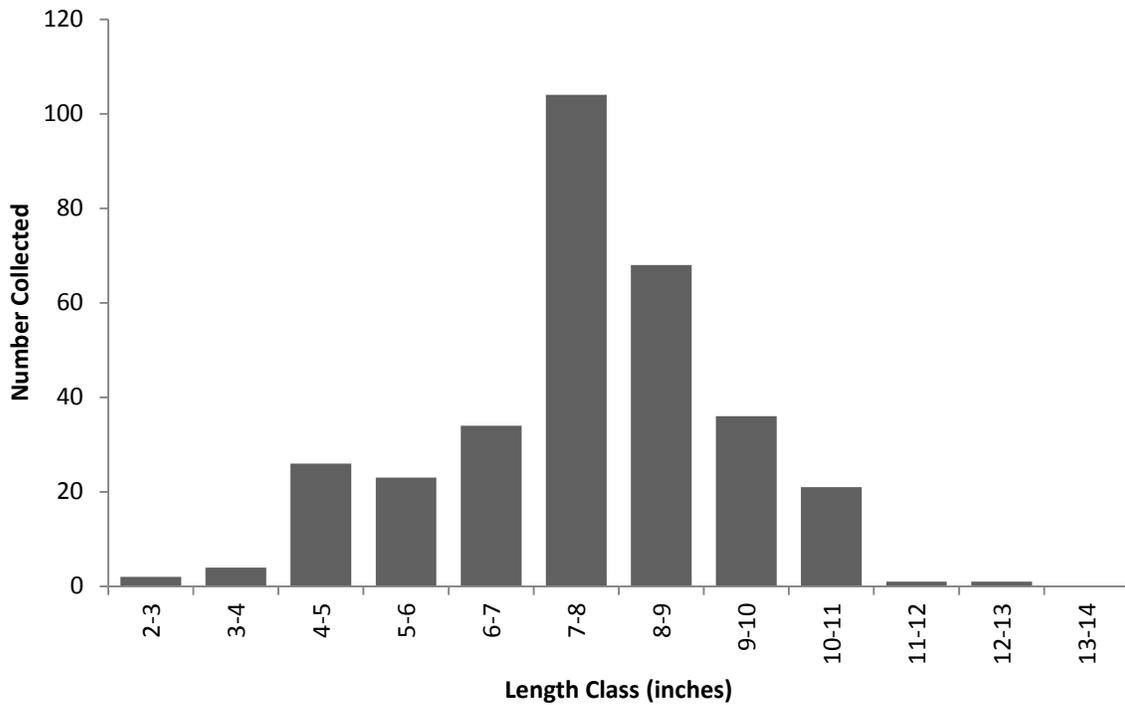


Figure 2. Length distribution of sunfish (bluegill and redear) collected throughout Albemarle Lake in 2012.

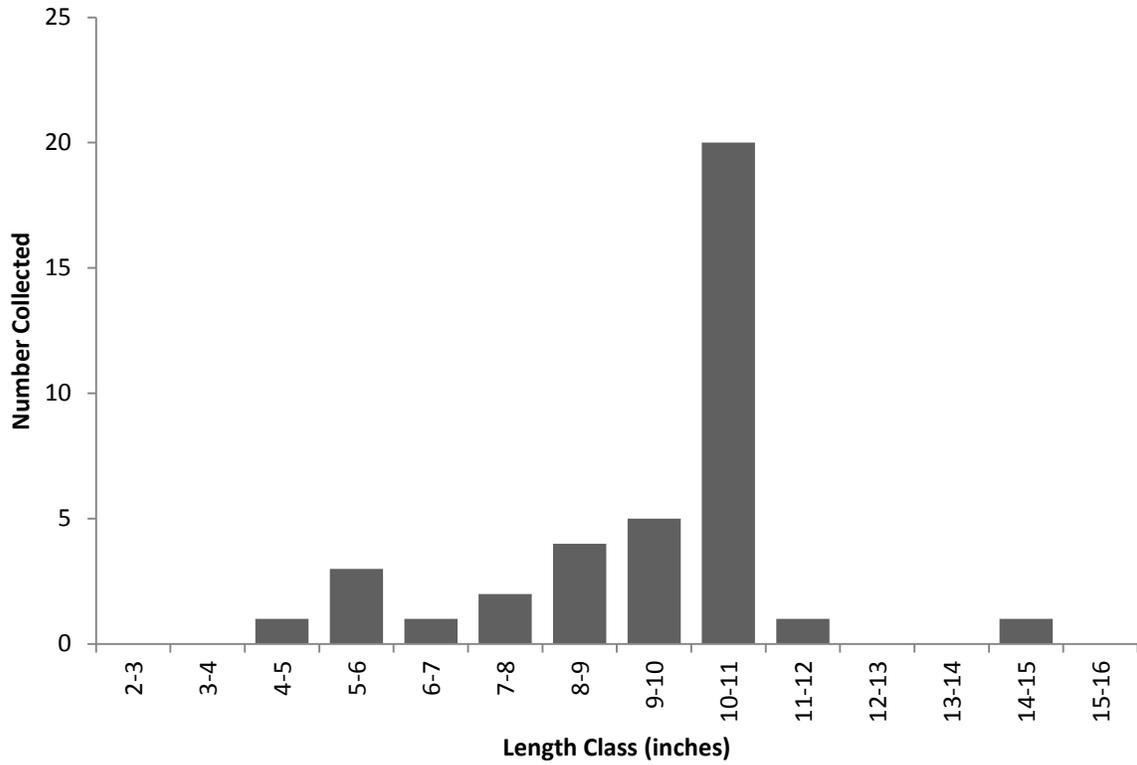


Figure 3. Length distribution of crappie collected with trapnets throughout Albemarle Lake in 2012.

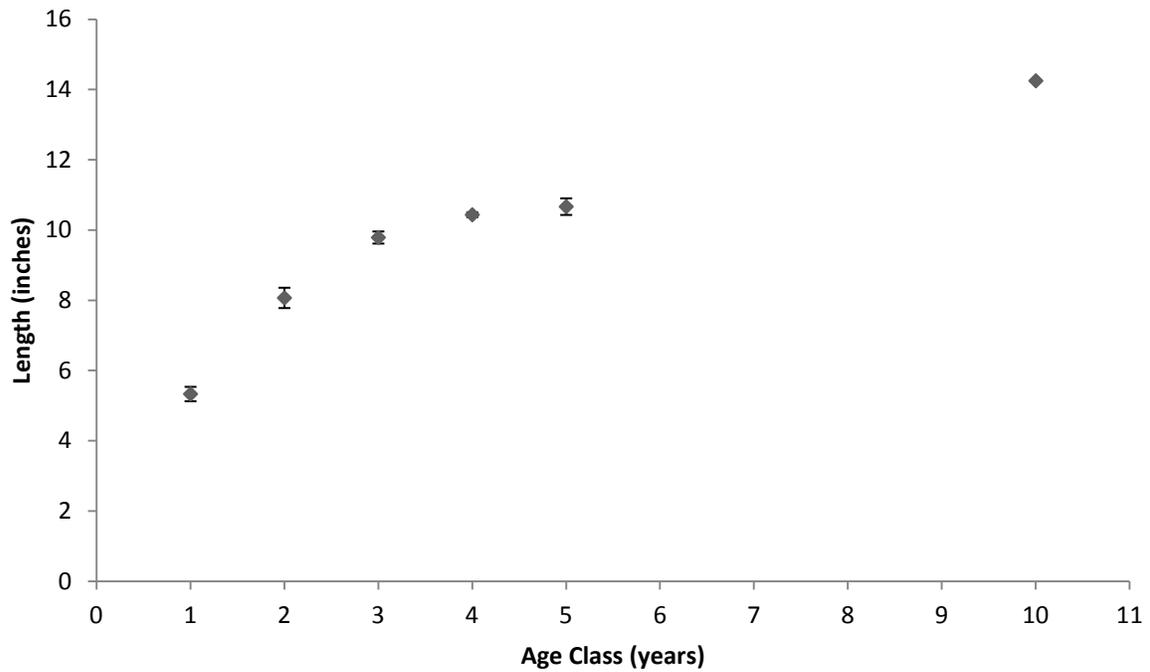


Figure 4. Average length-at-age of crappie collected throughout Albemarle Lake in 2012. Error bars indicate standard error.