



## 2015 Bark Camp Lake Fisheries Management Report

Bark Camp Lake is a 61-acre lake located in Scott County. It is the oldest Department-owned lake in Southwest Virginia. When construction of the lake was completed in the mid 1950's, a beautiful lake completely surrounded by forested land was born. Some of the trees surrounding the lake have found their way into the lake and are providing good habitat for fish and good fishing spots for anglers. Clear water and fairly dense stands of aquatic vegetation offer anglers a unique scenario. A variety of fish species are available for anglers, including largemouth bass, black crappie, several sunfish species, channel catfish, and trout. Most of these fish populations are self-sustaining, meaning that they reproduce in the lake and maintain fishable populations without the need for stocking. Bark Camp Lake is a designated stocked trout water and catchable-size rainbow and brown trout are stocked eight times between October 1<sup>st</sup> and May 30<sup>th</sup> each year. Grass carp are also stocked as needed to control aquatic vegetation.

A Virginia freshwater fishing license is required to fish the lake, and a trout-fishing license is required from October 1<sup>st</sup> through June 15<sup>th</sup>. The lake is within the Clinch Ranger District of the Jefferson National Forest, therefore a National Forest Stamp is required. The U. S. Forest Service also charges a parking (access) fee of \$3.00. A boat ramp, restrooms, universally accessible fishing piers and camping are available for use by anglers and others. Campers should contact the Clinch Ranger District at (276) 679-8370. The largemouth bass population in Bark Camp Lake is currently managed under an 11-14-inch protected slot limit with a creel limit of 5 fish per day. All other species are managed under VDGIF statewide regulations

The fish populations in Bark Camp Lake are sampled each year in May using boat-mounted electrofishing gear. Fish collected during these population surveys are measured, weighed, and released back into the lake. The data collected during the annual samples provide biologists with important information about the relative abundance (number of fish collected per hour of sampling) and size structure of the various fish populations. These ongoing monitoring efforts also allow biologists to assess trends in the fish populations over time.

### Largemouth Bass

Largemouth bass were the most abundant fish species collected in the 2014 electrofishing sample. Based on this long-term monitoring data, the abundance of largemouth bass in 2014 (81 fish/hr) was down slightly compared to 2013, but was still above the average CPUE from previous samples (Figure 1). Largemouth bass observed during the 2014 sample ranged in length from 3 to 19 inches with an average length of 10.2 inches (Figure 2). Thirteen percent of the adult largemouth bass were 12 inches or larger and 9% were 15 inches or larger. The length distribution of largemouth bass reveals a substantial decline of

fish just prior to entering the protected slot limit, which is likely attributable to harvest mortality. The abundance of preferred-size ( $\geq 15$  in.) largemouth bass appears to vary substantially from year to year (Figure 3). Although the number of largemouth  $\geq 15$  inches in 2014 (6 fish/hr) was down from 2013, it was within the range of variation observed from previous sampling efforts.

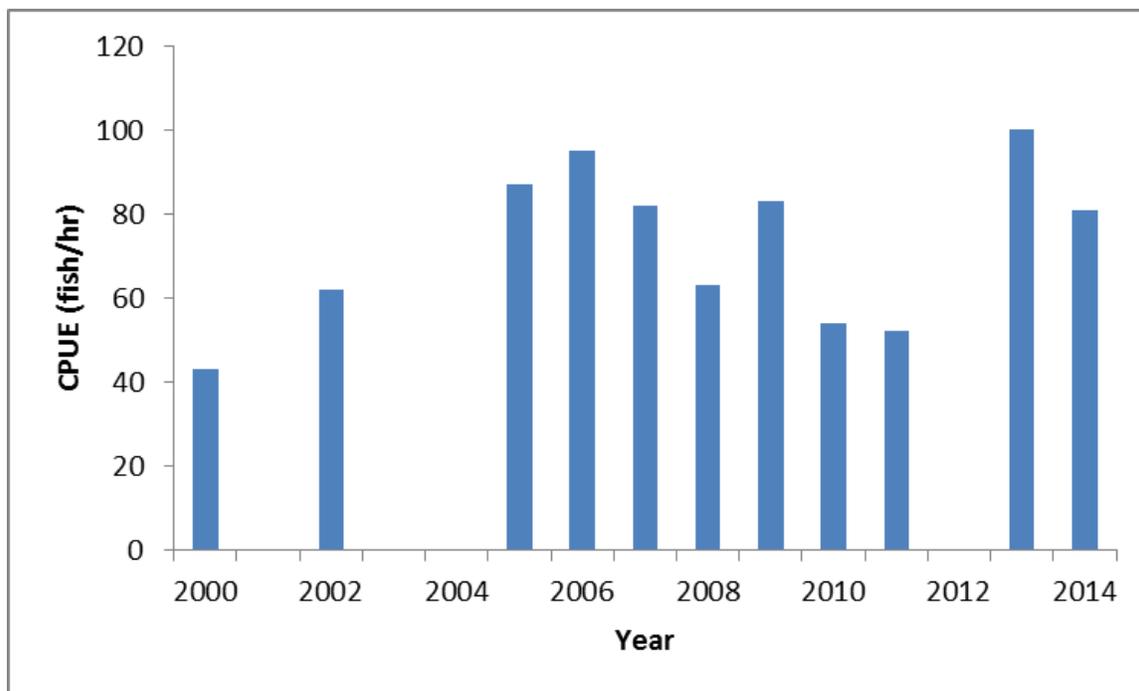


Figure 1. Number of largemouth bass collected per hour of sampling in Bark Camp Lake 2000-2014. The lake was not sampled in 2001, 2003, 2004, or 2012.

### Sunfish

Anglers fishing for sunfish will find a great variety of options. Bluegills are the dominant sunfish species, but redear, pumpkinseed, redbreast sunfish and warmouths are also available in fishable numbers (Figure 4). Black crappie abundance varies substantially from year to year, but is generally low.

### Catfish

Channel catfish and bullheads offer something for those anglers who target catfish. The lake is not known for exceptional catfishing, but some very large channel catfish have been collected in the past. Some of these channel cats were over 30 inches long, so the lake definitely has the potential to produce some trophies.

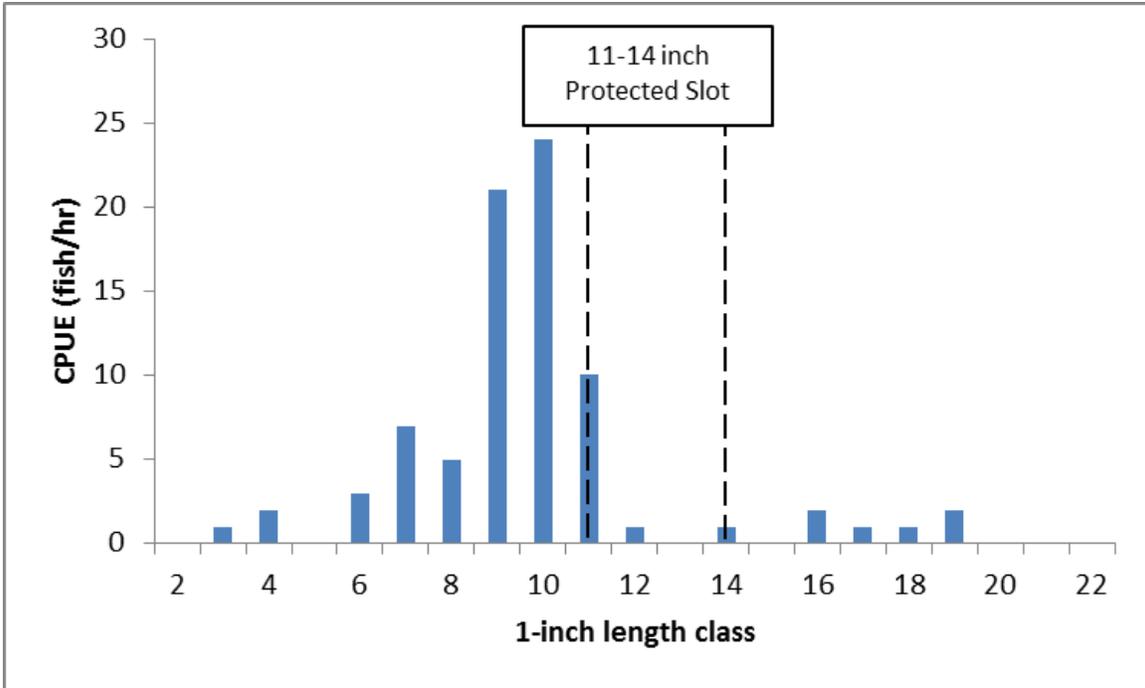


Figure 2. Length frequency distribution of largemouth bass collected during Bark Camp Lake electrofishing samples in spring 2014.

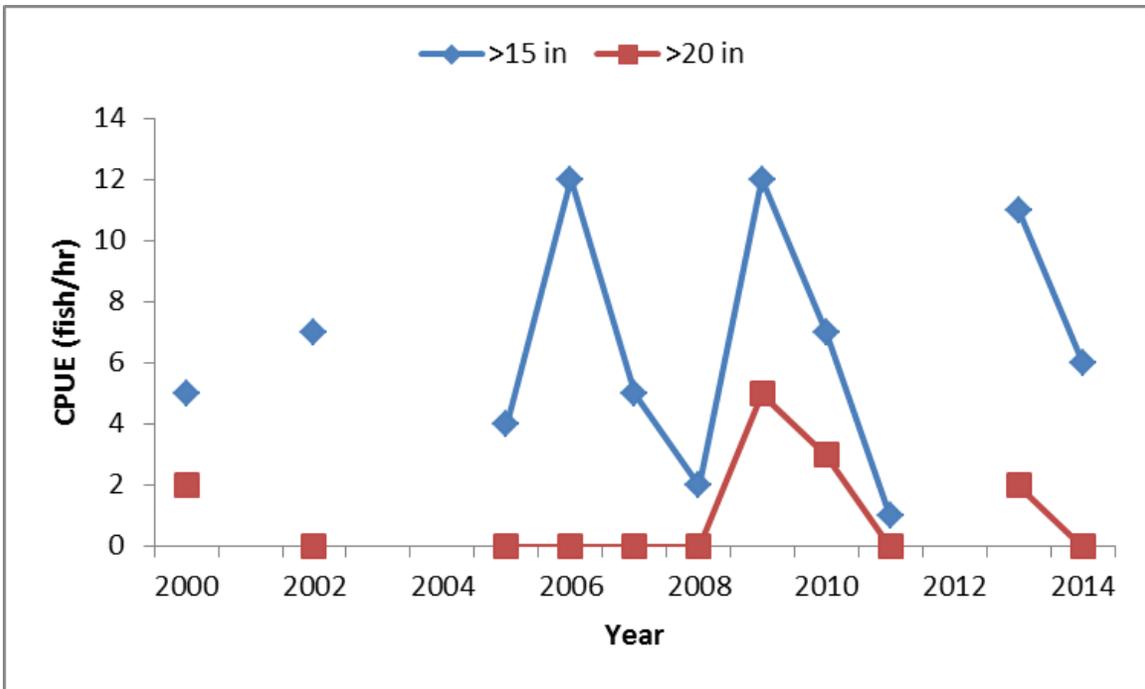


Figure 3. Relative abundance of preferred ( $\geq 15$  in.) and memorable ( $\geq 20$  in.) largemouth bass sampled from Bark Camp Lake 2000-2014. The lake was not sampled in 2001, 2003, 2004, or 2012.

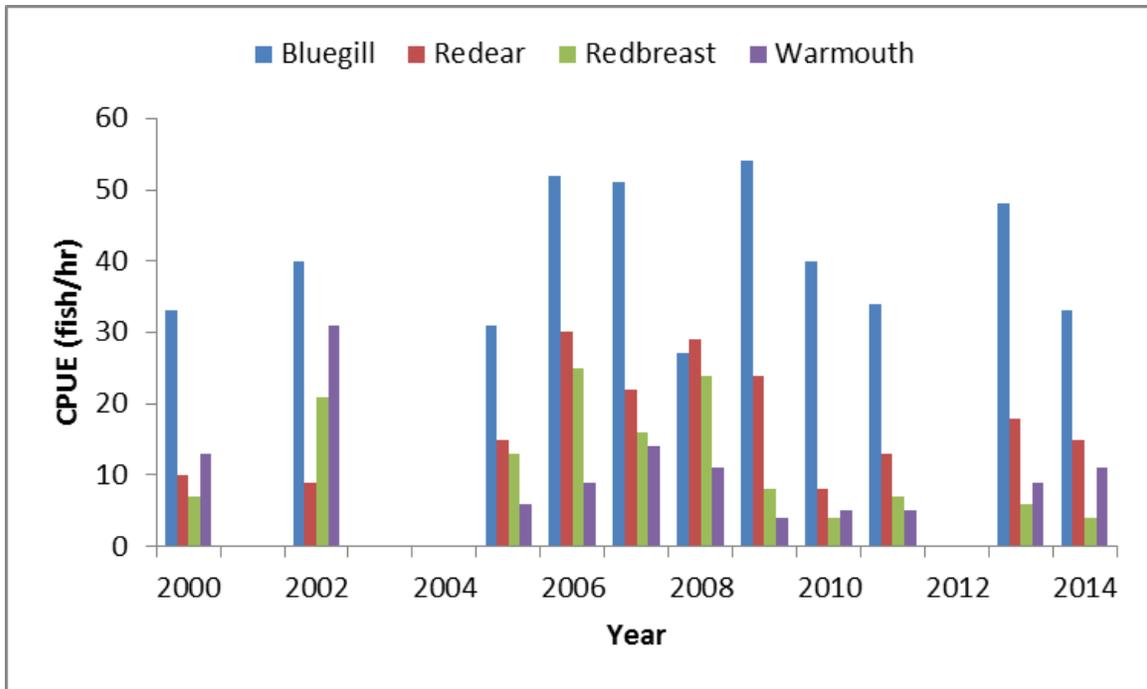


Figure 4. Relative abundance of various sunfish species sampled from Bark Camp Lake 2000-2014. The lake was not sampled in 2001, 2003, 2004, or 2012.

**For more information on the fishery, contact Jeff Williams by telephone (276) 783-4860 or by e-mail [jeff.williams@dgif.virginia.gov](mailto:jeff.williams@dgif.virginia.gov)**