



## Lake Nelson Fisheries Management Report 2004



Lake Nelson is a 40-acre impoundment located in Nelson County, Virginia. This reservoir is owned by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) and is managed primarily for fisheries related activities. The only facilities available at this reservoir are a boat ramp, parking areas near the boat ramp and dam, and restroom facilities. Bank anglers can utilize a large mowed area adjoining the parking lot, a mowed dam, and a narrow strip of VDGIF property that extends around the entire shoreline. The lake is open 24 hours a day. Outboard motors are prohibited but electric motors are permitted.

The reservoir was impounded in 1958 and was stocked with various species of fish such as largemouth bass, bluegill, catfish, crappie, and grass carp. The most popular sportfish species are largemouth bass, black crappie, and bluegill. Grass carp were also introduced to control aquatic vegetation. Any grass carp caught should be immediately released unharmed.

Largemouth bass are abundant but most of these fish are less than 14 inches. Growth for these fish is very good with bass reaching 13 1/2 inches in three years. Largemouth bass were regulated with a 12-15 inch protected slot limit but this regulation was changed to a 14-20 inch protected slot in the spring of 2001. All bass caught between 14 and 20 inches should be immediately released unharmed. The new size limit was initiated to expand the number of larger size bass (> 15 inches) in the lake. There has been only a marginal increase in the number of bass over 14 inches since the new regulation was initiated but the number of larger fish should improve in the future.

The crappie population remains high due to a successful year class in 1999. This group of crappie comprises the bulk of the fishery but the numbers are declining due to poor year classes after 1999. These fish averaged 8-10 inches during the spring of 2003. Anglers looking for crappie should check beaver lodges or shoreline structure such as fallen trees.

Bluegill are the primary sunfish species available at Lake Nelson but there are some nice redear sunfish also available. Small and slow growing sunfish that are less than six inches in length dominate the sunfish population. If the new largemouth bass slot limit is successful at increasing the number of large bass, the number of sunfish may be reduced which should increase the average size of sunfish. A reduction in the number of sunfish is needed to improve growth.

There were no channel catfish collected from Lake Nelson in recent years despite annual stockings. Channel catfish stockings were discontinued in 2000 due to poor survival. However, beginning in 2003 this lake has received a trial stocking of larger channel catfish to determine if catfish stocked at larger sizes will be successful at producing a catfish fishery.

Lake Nelson has a very abundant fish population but the sizes of sunfish could be improved. The bass population is in good condition but could also benefit from additional large fish. It is hopeful that the new slot limit will increase the numbers of large bass, which may reduce the sunfish population and promote better growth. Overall, this fishery does provide quality fishing opportunities for many anglers. The lake can be reached from Route 29 near Colleen, then take Route 655 about 2.8 miles to Arrington; go through Arrington, then left on Route 812, go about 2.2 miles and watch for the sign. Turn left and follow the road to the lake. For additional information, call 434-525-7522.