



## Lake Brittle 2007



Lake Brittle (77-acres) is located in Fauquier County near the town of Warrenton. This lake was impounded in 1953 and became the first impoundment in Virginia built with Dingell-Johnson Funds which are tax dollars from the sale of fishing tackle (now referred to as the Sport Fish Restoration Act). Lake Brittle offers anglers a typical warmwater fishery comprised of largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie, and channel catfish. In addition, walleye have been stocked annually since 1979. Walleye survival has been good in this small impoundment and offers anglers a unique opportunity to catch a traditionally northern species. Several undesirable species such as green sunfish, brown and yellow bullheads, gizzard shad, and common carp account for much of the fish biomass in this small impoundment.

Approximately 77 flathead catfish averaging 2.2 pounds were stocked in 1990. These fish were collected from the Altamaha River, Georgia, by electrofishing and were transported to Lake Brittle as a biological control for the abundant forage and bullhead catfish populations. In 1994, an additional 34 flathead catfish averaging 1.1 pounds were stocked. The introduction of flathead catfish has been very effective in controlling the once overabundant bullhead population.

DGIF fisheries biologists sample the fishery approximately every two to three years. Most recently, an electrofishing sample was conducted in May of 2006. 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.

The population structure of largemouth bass remained similar to findings from 2003, with Proportional Stock Density (PSD) values slightly decreasing (PSD 57) over the previous sample in 2001 (PSD 58). Relative Stock Density of "Preferred" fish (RSD-P) greater than 15" increased to 26 in 2006, which is similar to the RSD-P value from the previous sample year (25). Catch per unit effort (CPUE) of largemouth bass was 111 fish/hour. Angler success should be very good at Lake Brittle with good numbers of bass larger than 15" available for the catching.

The bluegill fishery has continued to improve since the 2001 sample and is currently in a state of balance (PSD 33, RSD-P 2). Panfish fisheries are generally considered “balanced” when PSD values fall in the range of 20 – 60. Ample opportunities exist for anglers to target panfish during the spring/summer when these fish tend to move in shallow shoreline areas that are accessible by both bank or boat anglers.

Black crappies generally are considered an undesirable species in small impoundments due to their ability to quickly overpopulate and stunt. Lake Brittle is no exception, with large numbers of small crappies (<8”) dominating the population. Anglers are encouraged to fish for and harvest any crappie caught up to the 25-fish/day creel limit. Crappies are readily available lake-wide during the spring – early summer months. Anglers should concentrate on fishing structure whether it is a natural downed tree or a marked fish attractor. Numerous fish attractors are located around the lake, which are marked with buoys for easy identification. Small jigs or minnows seem to work best on this prolific panfish.

Channel catfish are another popular fish species available to anglers. DGIF annually stocks channel catfish (20 fish/acre) to maintain a quality fishery. Walleye are the only other species that are stocked annually (100 fish/acre). Both walleye and channel catfish generally do not successfully reproduce in small impoundments and are stocked on an annual basis to provide additional fishing opportunities.

General regulations are posted at the Lake Brittle parking area. Fishing is currently permitted 24 hours a day, and a boat ramp is available for anglers to use free of charge. However; beginning during the Spring 2007, access will be restricted from midnight till 5am in efforts to control illegal activities. In addition to boat access, there is ample shoreline for bank anglers and a public fishing pier. Fauquier County Parks and Recreation operates a concession at the lake (open March – October) which offers boat rentals, live bait, fishing tackle, and snacks. A new fishing pier and fishing resource center are on tap for 2004.

Lake Brittle can be reached from Rt. 29 by turning east onto Rt. 600 near New Baltimore. Once on Rt. 600, turn right onto Rt. 793 and follow trailblazer signs to the lake.

For more information about, please contact:  
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