



Gatewood Reservoir 2008

Gatewood Reservoir is nestled in the hills of southwestern Pulaski County in the Eastern Divide Ranger District of the George Washington/Jefferson National Forest. The reservoir is a 162-acre water supply impoundment owned by the Town of Pulaski. Gatewood is a scenic lake, where you can still “get away from it all” for a day. It is an excellent spot to bring the family for a picnic or camping and fishing. Lake facilities include a campground, picnic areas, nature trails and wilderness camping. With its remote location and peaceful surroundings and the added benefit of great angling opportunities, Gatewood Reservoir is definitely an untapped “Jewel of the Blue Ridge”.

Fish populations at Gatewood Reservoir are sampled in May by Department fish biologists using electrofishing. “Electrofishing” is a fish collection technique that uses a boat-mounted generator and voltage regulator to put an electric shock into the water. The shock affects fish that swim near the boat’s electric field. The electric field is limited to an area within a few feet around the boat. “Electroshocked” fish actually swim towards booms dangling off the front of the boat, where they are temporarily stunned and can be netted by biologists. Fish collected during electrofishing surveys are measured, weighed, and released back into the lake. Length information from collected fish gives biologists an indication of spawning success and whether there are good numbers of fish for anglers to catch. Weight information tells biologists whether these fish are in good condition. Time spent electrofishing is recorded so biologists can measure catch rates of each species and compare this information between years.

Largemouth Bass

The main species collected by electrofishing at Gatewood Reservoir are largemouth bass and bluegill. Between 1996 and 2007, collections of these species indicate that reproduction is consistent from year to year. In addition, catch rates for both species have been stable over those years, indicating that these populations are not being overfished. Largemouth bass and bluegill weights at Gatewood Reservoir indicate they are in good condition.

Largemouth bass sizes during spring electrofishing in 2001, 2005, and 2007 were consistent. During these years, between 60 and 70 percent of the adult largemouth bass (over 8 inches long) collected were over 12 inches long and 21 to 43 percent of the adult largemouth bass were over 15 inches long. Fishing for largemouth bass is good. Anglers

will find good numbers of 12 to 15 inch largemouth bass. The largemouth bass population is in better shape than it has been in the past 10 years.

Panfish

Bluegill and redear sunfish angling are the main attractions at this clear water lake. Catching large sunfish at the lake is likely easiest during peak spawning time between mid-May and mid-June. When fishing at other times of the year, look for these sunfish in deeper water near woody debris in the lake. Because the lake is often very clear during spawning season, anglers may need to fish in early morning and late evening to avoid spooking these fish.

Black crappie and redear sunfish collections vary from year to year, depending on the time of the sample. However, collection of good numbers of these species in several samples during the 1996 to 2007 period indicates that their populations are in good condition.

Yellow Perch

Yellow perch were not found during electrofishing sampling at Gatewood Reservoir in spring 2001 but were found during sampling in spring 2005. This species, found in nearby Claytor Lake, was apparently introduced to this reservoir between 2001 and 2005. Yellow perch exploded in numbers by the time the lake was sampled in May 2005, when we collected 82 yellow perch per hour of electrofishing. In May 2007, we collected only 14 yellow perch per hour of electrofishing. Reduced densities of yellow perch are likely due to the largemouth bass population keeping them under control by eating them. Anglers are encouraged to harvest yellow perch from this lake to keep them from competing with the abundant bluegill and redear sunfish, which anglers prefer to catch.

Other Species

Smallmouth bass provide the opportunity for anglers to catch occasional 2 to 3 pound fish. Black crappie can be caught around the numerous beaver lodges located on the lake. Channel catfish are stocked every other year, and an occasional 20 pounder is caught.

Size and Creel Limits

The only size limit on Gatewood Reservoir is a 12-inch minimum size limit for bass. Statewide daily creel limits are enforced as follows: 5 black bass, 25 crappie, 50 sunfish, and 20 catfish. Yellow perch may be harvested in unlimited numbers.

Location and More Information

Only electric motors are allowed on the lake. Paddleboats and fishing boats with electric motors are available for rent and private boats with only electric motors may be launched. Equipment, fishing supplies, and some grocery items are available at the park store. More information about fishing hours, boat rentals, and camping are available from the Gatewood Park and Reservoir website at <http://www.pulaskigatewood.com/pulaskivirginiacamping.aspx>.

To get to the lake from Interstate 81, take the Pulaski Exit (Exit 94, Rt. 99 North), continue through the town of Pulaski (Rt. 99 will become Third Street). Turn left at Randolph Avenue, go one block, turn right on West Main Street, go 3 blocks, turn right on Magazine Street, go one block, and turn left on Mt. Olivet Road (Route 710). Travel 2.3 miles to hard surface road on right, go 6 miles from this turn to the park. The approximate travel time from Interstate 81 to the park is 20 minutes.

For more information on this reservoir, take a look at the website above or call Gatewood Park at (540) 980-2561 or the Pulaski County Parks and Recreation Department office at (540) 994-8624.

More information is also available from John Copeland, Fisheries Biologist, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Blacksburg Office, phone (540) 961-8304, email: John.Copeland@dgif.virginia.gov.