



## **Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake 2009**

Located in Fluvanna County, Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake is a 50-acre impoundment owned and managed by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The lake contains self-sustaining populations of largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, and black crappie. The lake has provided excellent largemouth bass and panfish fisheries since the Department began an annual fertilization program in 1970. The fertilizer enhances the bloom of phytoplankton in the lake, which provides important food for the production and growth of fish. The phytoplankton also gives the lake its greenish color in the spring and summer months. To provide additional angling opportunities, the reservoir is annually stocked with channel catfish. In 2008, the fish community of Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake was sampled by boat electrofishing (May) and trapnets (November). This report summarizes the results of these surveys and what anglers can expect to catch in Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake.

A total of six fish species were collected in the 2008 surveys (Table 1). Bluegill and largemouth bass were the most abundant species collected in the electrofishing survey while black crappie and bluegill were the most abundant species collected in the trapnet survey (Table 1). The catch rate for largemouth bass was slightly lower than catch rates from previous surveys, but was still appropriate for a Central Virginia impoundment. The decrease in catch was primarily due to low numbers of small bass (< 12 inches) collected (Figure 1). Catch rates for bass above 12 inches increased considerably from previous surveys and anglers fishing Fluvanna-Ruritan should experience high catch rates for bass in the 12 to 15 inch range and good catch rates for bass in the 15 to 20 inch range. The lack of smaller bass appears to be a result of poor reproduction in 2006; low reproduction in 2006 is not a large concern because of good reproduction in other years and an estimated high annual survival rate for largemouth bass. Largemouth bass up to age-10 were collected in the 2008 survey (Figure 2).

Numerous bass 20 inches and above were collected (Figure 1), indicating a good potential for trophy bass production in Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake. The largest bass collected measured 23.4 inches and weighed 8.68 lbs. The good growth of young and middle-aged bass is imperative to trophy potential of bass. In Fluvanna-Ruritan, largemouth bass growth is decent but could be better with the average bass only reaching 12 inches by age-3 (Figure 2). Additionally, small to moderate-sized bass (< 20 inches) were slightly skinny, especially bass less than 15 inches. Anglers looking to harvest bass should creel fish from the more abundant, smaller size classes (< 15 inches). In an attempt to provide additional bass food and increase the growth of bass, threadfin shad were stocked in Fluvanna-Ruritan during the spring of 2008. If they survive the cold winters, threadfin shad are ideal forage for bass because they can reproduce multiple times throughout the summer and they stay small enough to be consumed by juvenile bass (unlike the faster growing gizzard shad). Anglers searching for bass should fish the numerous brushpiles, the main-lake points, or the deep shoreline up lake from the dam. An alternative fishing technique to try would be to fish with an imitation shad lure in the afternoon around the schools of surfacing threadfin shad.

Sunfish catch rates were very high with bluegill comprising the majority of sunfish collected. The bulk of bluegill collected were in the 6 to 8 inch range, but a few fish above 9 inches were collected (Figure 3). Only a small number of redear sunfish were collected but the majority of redear collected were large sunfish (10 + inches). The fertilization program has shown the largest effect with the increase in the production and growth of sunfish throughout the lake. Anglers should easily catch their limit of harvestable-sized sunfish during a summer's day at Fluvanna-Ruritan. The best places to fish for sunfish are around the numerous brushpiles throughout the lake and the off the dam shoreline.

The only other fisheries to mention are the black crappie and channel catfish fisheries. Catch rates for black crappie were low and are likely a function of low population density. Crappie anglers will have to work to catch their limit in Fluvanna-Ruritan, but the fish they catch should be worth the effort. The 2008 survey indicates that the crappie population has a high portion of fish in the 8 to 12 inch range, with a few crappie above 12 inches available to anglers (Figure 4). A small number of channel catfish were collected in the 2008 surveys, but catfish often frequent deeper water making them more difficult to catch with electrofishing and trapnet gear. Channel catfish are being stocked annually, so anglers always have a good chance of catching one.

Anglers looking for a remote location to fish with excellent bass and sunfish fisheries should visit Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake. There is ample parking, a concrete ramp that accommodates most boats, and an abundant amount of open 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.

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Species	Electrofishing			Trapnets		
	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of Catch	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/net night)	Percentage of Catch
<b>Black Crappie</b>	7	6	2	51	2.55	58
<b>Bluegill</b>	229	192	66	24	2.4	27
<b>Channel Catfish</b>	4	3	1	None	None	None
<b>Largemouth Bass</b>	105	88	30	5	0.5	6
<b>Redear Sunfish</b>	3	3	1	7	0.7	8
<b>Warmouth Sunfish</b>	None	None	None	1	0.1	1

Table 1. Species account and catch rates for fish collected throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2008.

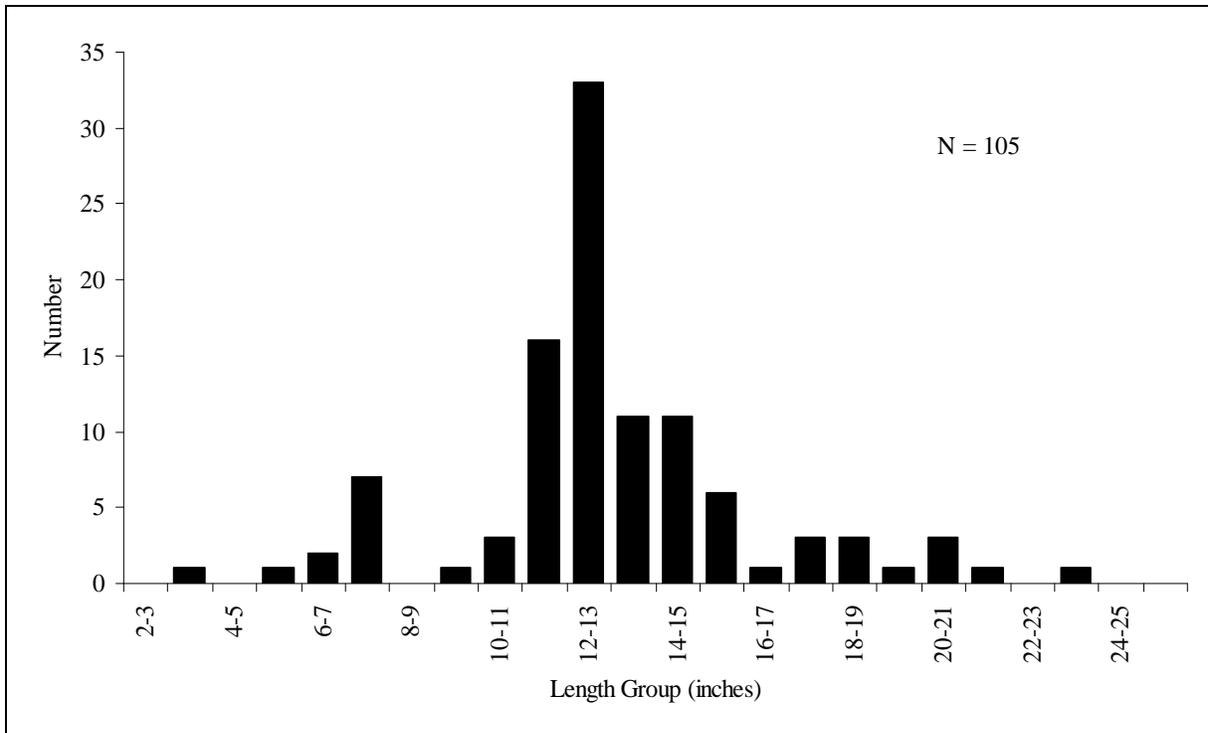


Figure 1. Length distribution of largemouth bass collected with electrofishing gear throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2008.

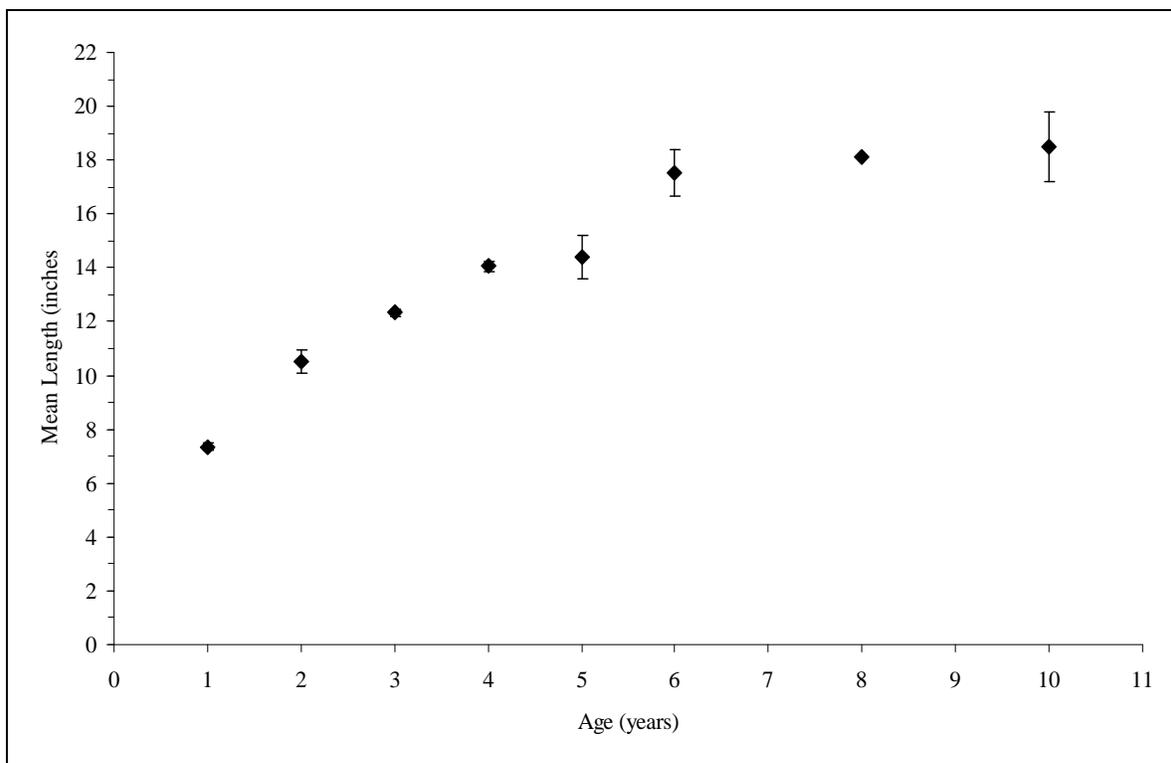


Figure 2. Average length-at-age of largemouth bass collected throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2008. Error bars indicate standard error.

Figure 3. Length distribution of bluegill collected with electrofishing gear throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2008.

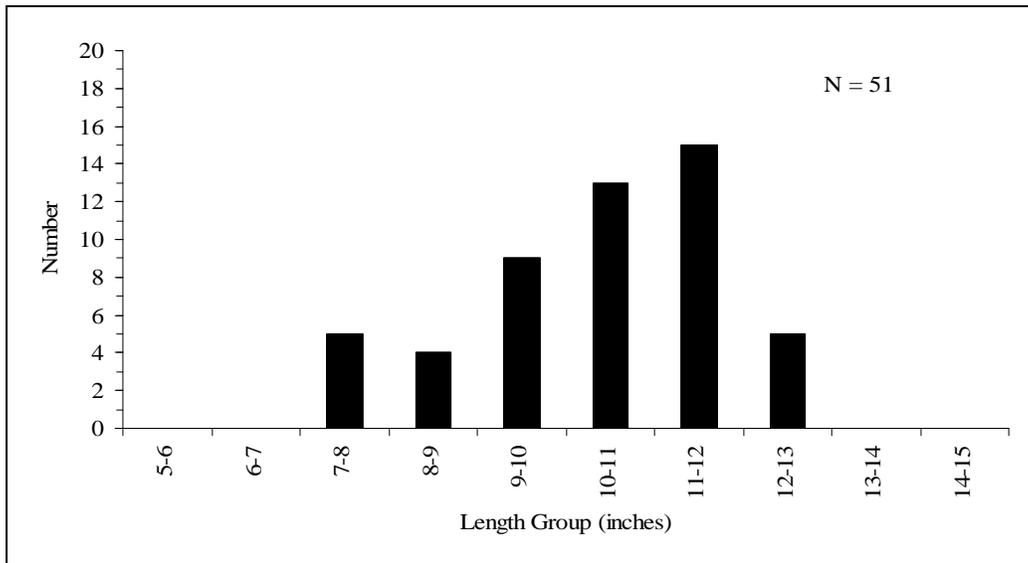


Figure 4. Length distribution of black crappie collected with trapnets throughout Fluvanna-Ruritan Lake in 2008.