



Rivanna River 2011



The Rivanna River, a tributary of the James River, runs through the piedmont of Virginia and is enriched with historical significance. Remnants from navigation locks and dams that were established by Thomas Jefferson can still be seen throughout the river. State legislators even thought highly enough of the river to establish it as the first state scenic river in Virginia. The deep history even extends to the fisheries in the Rivanna with stories of American shad runs that provided for very important commercial operations to the areas surrounding the watershed. In more recent times, the Rivanna has offered anglers wonderful fisheries for smallmouth bass and panfish (mainly redbreast sunfish and bluegill). In October 2010, the fish community within the South Fork of the Rivanna River was sampled at eight locations between the Rivanna Reservoir and the James River. This report summarizes the findings from the 2010 survey and informs anglers on what they can expect to catch from the Rivanna River.

The diversity of fish community is exceptional with a total of 46 different species collected in 2010 (Table 1). Cyprinid (minnow) species comprised the majority of the survey catch which is expected due to their small sizes and low place in the food chain. The abundance of these small fish is a good indication an abundant forage base for sportfish. Additionally, the 2010 survey indicates excellent sportfish potential for the Rivanna. Generally, one or more sportfish \geq stock-size collected per 10 m of sampling indicates a good fishery; the 2010 survey value for the Rivanna was 2.5 stock-size sportfish/10m.

Smallmouth bass are the most popular sportfish of anglers fishing the Rivanna River and survey result indicate that the species popularity is justified. Catch rates for smallmouth bass were excellent for a river the size of the Rivanna, and the smallmouth bass population had ideal portions of adult and juvenile bass. Anglers should experience good to excellent catch rates for bass up to 16 inches (Figure 1). Anglers will have to work a little harder to catch bass greater than 16 inches but the larger-sized fish are swimming throughout the river. There is even the potential for anglers to catch that often coveted trophy smallmouth bass. The largest smallmouth bass collected measured 20 inches and weighted just over 4 lbs. Smallmouth bass fishing should be good throughout the river, but by far the best populations were located in the lower river reaches (downstream of Palmyra to the confluence of the James River).

The panfish fishery is primarily comprised of redbreast sunfish. Bluegill, rock bass, redear sunfish, and crappie are other panfish species found in the Rivanna, but at much lower abundance. Anglers should catch large numbers of panfish but most will be small; panfish in the 3 to 8 inch range is what can be expected (Figure 2). Although not large, these fish can provide a fun filled trip for any angler looking for frequent action. Small twister-tail grubs, rooster-tailed spinners, live crickets, and live worms are all popular baits for these fish.

The Rivanna River also provides a limited fishery for largemouth bass. Most largemouth are small (<12 inches) and are located in areas with slow flows and shoreline structure. Channel catfish are abundant in deep holes and runs throughout the river. No catfish over 21 inches were collected, but anglers can expect catfish in the 12 to 20 inch range (the perfect size for frying!). Catfish anglers should try fishing with live minnows, cut-bait, or stink-bait.

The Rivanna River is a quaint, scenic river that any angler, if given the opportunity, should visit. There are numerous public access sites that offer floats ranging in length from 2 to 16 miles. The lack of hazards and major rapids should allow a comfortable trip for even the most novice boaters. To find out more about the floating opportunities visit our website at <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/waterbodies/display.asp?id=202§ion=maps>. Make sure you allow enough time to reach the take-out location on some of the longer floats. Most access areas only accommodate watercrafts that can be manually carried to the river (i.e. canoes and small Jon boats). Motor boaters can access the lower reaches of the river by ascending up the Rivanna from the Columbia Boat Launch on the James River.

For more information on the Rivanna River, please contact:

Johnathan Harris
District Fisheries Biologist
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries
4010 West Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23230
(804) 367-6764

Table 1. Species account and catch rates for fish collected throughout the Rivanna River, 2010.

Species	Number Collected	CPUE (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of Total Catch
American Eel	139	20.5	2.5
Black Crappie	1	0.1	0.0
Black Jumper	308	45.4	5.5
Blacknose Dace	1	0.1	0.0
Bluegill	437	64.4	7.8
Bluespotted Sunfish	1	0.1	0.0
Brown Bullhead	10	1.5	0.2
Bull Chub	1321	194.7	23.5
Central Stoneroller	265	39.1	4.7
Channel Catfish	24	3.5	0.4
Comely Shiner	41	6.0	0.7
Common Carp	4	0.6	0.1
Common Shiner	184	27.1	3.3
Creek Chubsucker	3	0.4	0.1
Fallfish	120	17.7	2.1
Fantail Darter	26	3.8	0.5
Flathead Catfish	2	0.3	0.0
Gizzard Shad	2	0.3	0.0
Golden Redhorse	4	0.6	0.1
Green Sunfish	32	4.7	0.6
Johnny Darter	9	1.3	0.2
Largemouth Bass	82	12.1	1.5
Longfin Darter	1	0.1	0.0
Longnose Dace	1	0.1	0.0
Longnose Gar	3	0.4	0.1
Margined Madtom	139	20.5	2.5
Northern Hogsucker	95	14.0	1.7
Quillback	2	0.3	0.0
Redbreast	950	140.0	16.9
Redear	7	1.0	0.1
Roanoke Darter	216	31.8	3.8
Rock Bass	64	9.4	1.1
Rosefin Shiner	62	9.1	1.1
Rosyface Shiner	128	18.9	2.3
Rosyside Dace	4	0.6	0.1
Satfin Shiner	51	7.5	0.9
Sea Lamprey	10	1.5	0.2
Shield Darter	2	0.3	0.0
Shorthead Redhorse	3	0.4	0.1
Smallmouth Bass	184	27.1	3.3
Spottail Shiner	588	86.7	10.5
Telescope Shiner	56	8.3	1.0
Torrent Sucker	5	0.7	0.1
White Catfish	6	0.9	0.1
White Sucker	24	3.5	0.4
Yellow Bullhead	1	0.1	0.0

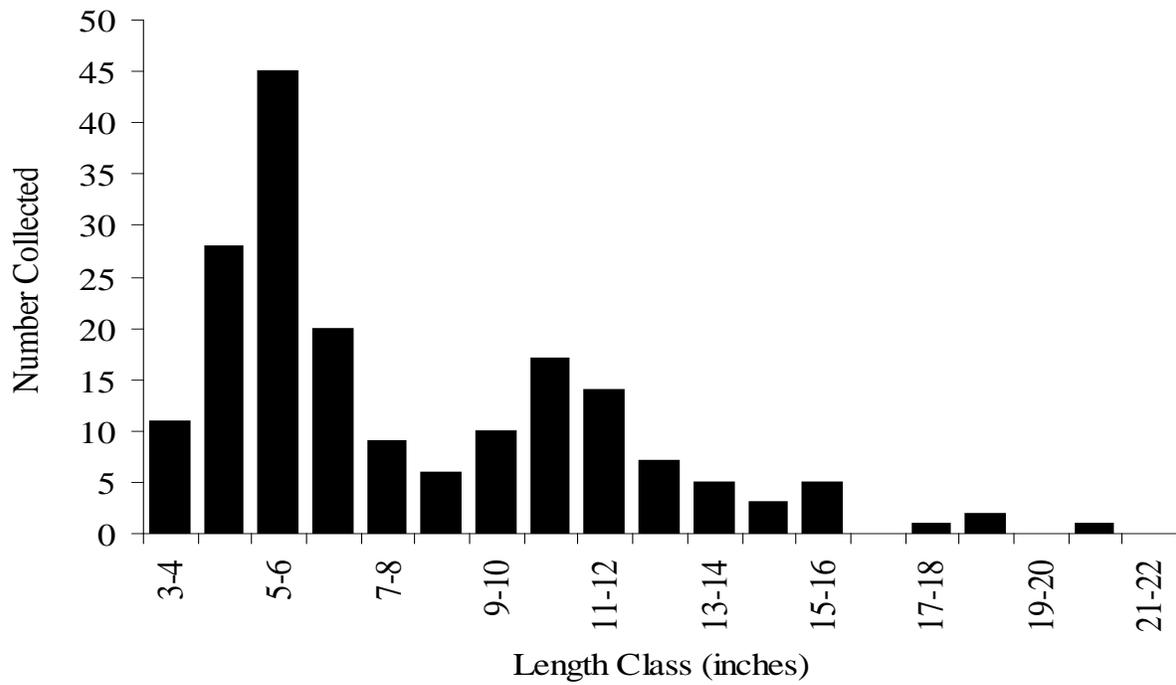


Figure 1. Length distribution of smallmouth bass collected throughout the Rivanna River, 2010.

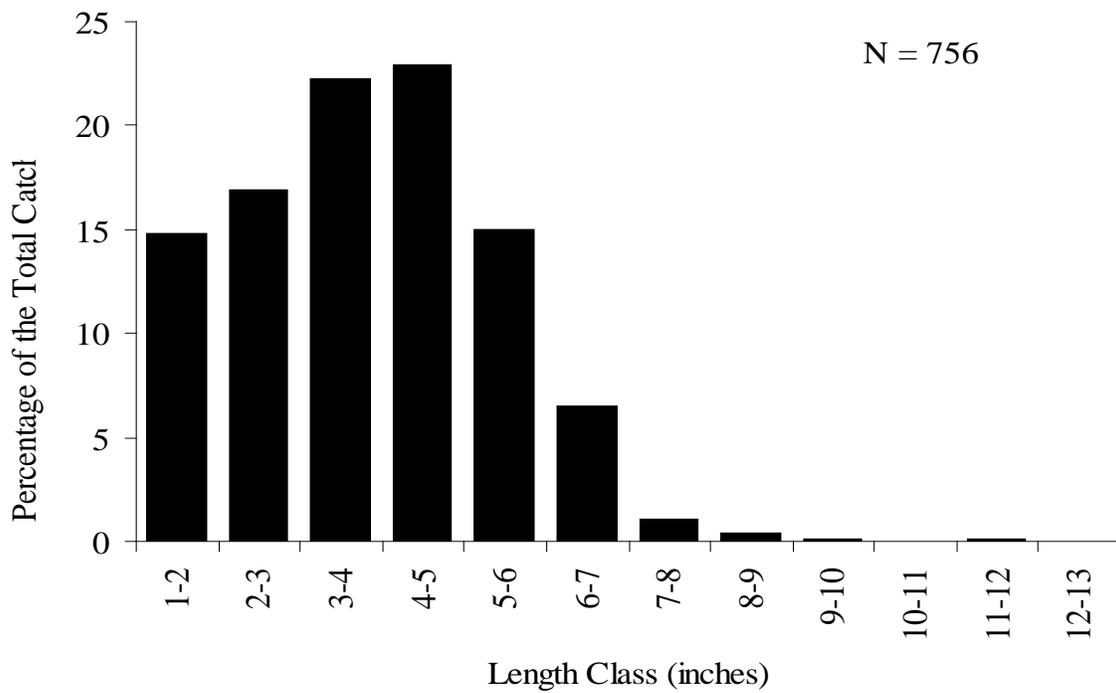


Figure 2. Length distribution of panfish collected throughout the Rivanna River, 2010.