



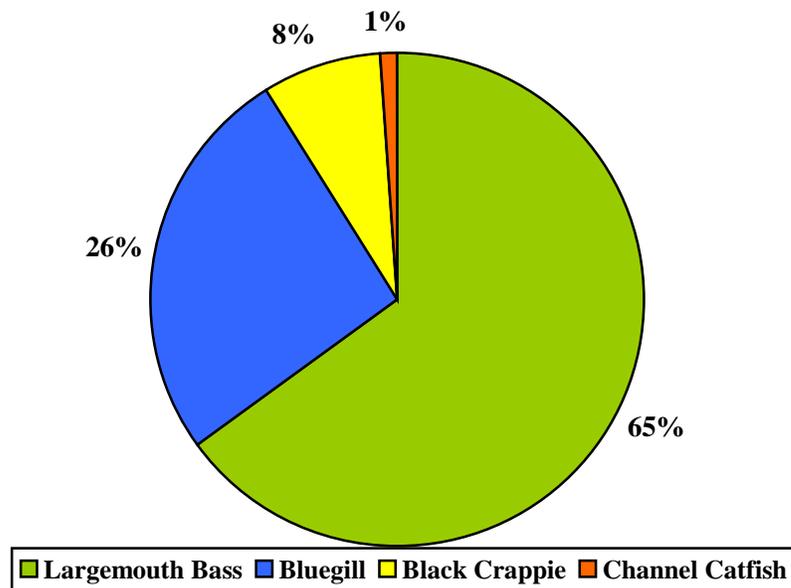
## Laurel Lake - Breaks Interstate Park Lake 2013 Fisheries Management Report

Laurel Lake is a 12-acre impoundment located within the Breaks Interstate Park in Dickenson County. Like the rest of the park, the lake offers plenty of solitude and scenery. The shoreline is mostly forested, with walking trails providing good access to several bank fishing areas.

The lake's fishery is surprisingly good for a small waterbody. Largemouth bass are abundant. Most of the largemouth bass are 12 to 14 inches long, but some bigger bass are available for those with the skills, patience or luck to catch them. Bluegill sunfish are also abundant, and there are some really nice-sized bluegills available. Black crappie are present, but not abundant. Some nice flathead and channel catfish have also been collected in the past.

The lake was not sampled from 2002 through 2008 due to budget and personnel constraints. Biologists attempted to electrofish the lake in 2009 but found that aquatic vegetation severely limited boat access to much of the shoreline. The vegetation greatly reduced sampling efficiency. Biologists were not able to sample enough of the lake or collect enough fish to make meaningful observations about the fish populations. Some trophy-sized bass were observed but could not be collected due to problems created by the extensive growth of vegetation. Grass carp were stocked in 2009 and subsequent years in an attempt to control the vegetation.

Biologists sampled the lake in 2011 and 2012 to evaluate both the fish populations and the amount of vegetation present. Vegetation is still a complicating factor in sampling the lake but has decreased some. The following graph shows the species catch composition from the 2012 samples.



### Largemouth Bass and Bluegill

Largemouth bass catch rates (number collected per hour electro-fishing) went from 105 per hour in 2011 to 217 per hour in 2012. Compared to other small lakes in southwest Virginia these catch rates are considered high. There are not many largemouth bass over 15 inches but there are a lot of bass in the 11-14 inch range. Bluegill catch rates were 76 per hour in 2011 and 86 per hour in 2012. The size structure is fair but not many large bluegill were collected.

The Breaks Interstate Park offers lots of amenities including: lodging (motel and cabins), a fine restaurant, hiking trails, playgrounds, and a swimming pool. Of course, the park also offers breathtaking views of the Russell Fork River as it passes through what is known as the Grand Canyon of the East. For more information about the Breaks Interstate Park call 1-276-865-4413.

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