



Powhatan Ponds 2013



Located in the Powhatan Wildlife Management Area (WMA), the Powhatan ponds are a series of three small impoundments that are a combined total of 20 surface acres. The ponds lay in a series from west to east; the farthest western lying ponds is the bass pond followed by the bullhead pond then the sunfish pond. The bass and sunfish ponds have primitive boat launches while the bullhead pond requires a short walk (~ 100 yards) to access. Each pond offers ample shoreline fishing opportunities and has a typical fish community for a small Central Virginia pond (largemouth bass, sunfish, and channel catfish). During March, 2012 the fish communities of the Powhatan ponds were sampled by boat electrofishing gear. This report summarizes the results of these surveys and what anglers can expect to catch in the Powhatan Ponds.

A combined total of six fish species were collected from the three Powhatan Ponds (Table 1). Bluegill, largemouth bass, and redear sunfish were by far the most abundant species collected in each pond (Table 1), and the catch rates for each species were high. The largemouth bass populations of the bass and bullhead ponds are poor in terms of the size of bass available to anglers. Each pond is dominated by small bass (< 12 inches, Figure 1), and on average these small bass were very skinny. The bass pond is managed as a high density bass fishery to increase angler catch rates, so high numbers of small bass are expected. The sunfish pond has a much better size distribution of bass (Figure 1) due to annual removals of small bass with electrofishing gear. These small bass are stocked in the bass pond after removal. A few larger bass (> 15 inches) were collected in each pond but they were not very abundant. The largest bass collected was from the sunfish pond and measures 21 inches and weighed 6 pounds. The sunfish pond has the highest potential for anglers to catch a memorable or trophy bass because of its larger size and suitable bass habitat. Additionally, the removal of small bass from the sunfish pond reduces overcrowding and helps increase the growth of bass in the pond. Novice anglers and kids searching for fast action should target the high density bass fishery in the bass pond. The chance of catching a large bass in this pond is fairly low but catch rates should be very high.

Anglers searching for panfish should have high catch success for fish at each of the ponds, due to high abundances of bluegill and redear sunfish (Table 1). A small number of black crappie were collected in bass and bullhead ponds but catches of crappie were fairly uncommon. Crappie are not desired in small impoundments like the Powhatan Ponds because of the species tendency to overpopulate and stunt. Bluegill and redear populations were dominated by smaller individuals (< 7 inches), except in the bass pond (Figure 3). At this time, the best panfish fishery, in terms of the size of fish, appears to be in the bass pond. The bass pond had the highest percentage panfish in the 6 to 9 inch size classes (Figure 3), and was likely due to the predator (bass) stockings. The bass prey on small panfish, reduce their high numbers and improving panfish growth. Anglers searching for panfish should fish around the brush piles and beaver huts with crickets, worm, or small twister-tailed grubs.

Channel catfish offer anglers a different variety of fishing experience. Catch rates for channel catfish were low in the bass and bullhead pond but were surprisingly higher in the sunfish pond (Table 1). Catfish often frequent deeper water making them more difficult to catch with electrofishing gear. All catfish collected were larger than 11 inches with the largest

collected measuring greater than 21 inches. Catchable-sized channel catfish are stocked annually and should be easy to catch on some form of live or stink bait.

The Powhatan Ponds receive little fishing pressure and offer fishing locations that are off the beaten path. If you are looking for a peaceful day on the water, you should visit the Powhatan Ponds. Small boats with trolling motors are ideal for fishing each Pond. The ponds can be accessed from the entrance to the Powhatan WMA off Route 627.

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Table 1. Catch rates for fish collected from the Powhatan WMA Ponds in 2012. NC means none collected in pond during 2012 survey.

Species	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)		
	Bass Pond	Bullhead Pond	Sunfish Pond
Black Crappie	16	23	NC
Bluegill	151	194	201
Channel Catfish	NC	10	26
Largemouth Bass	239	187	221
Redear Sunfish	159	151	44
Warmouth	NC	NC	11

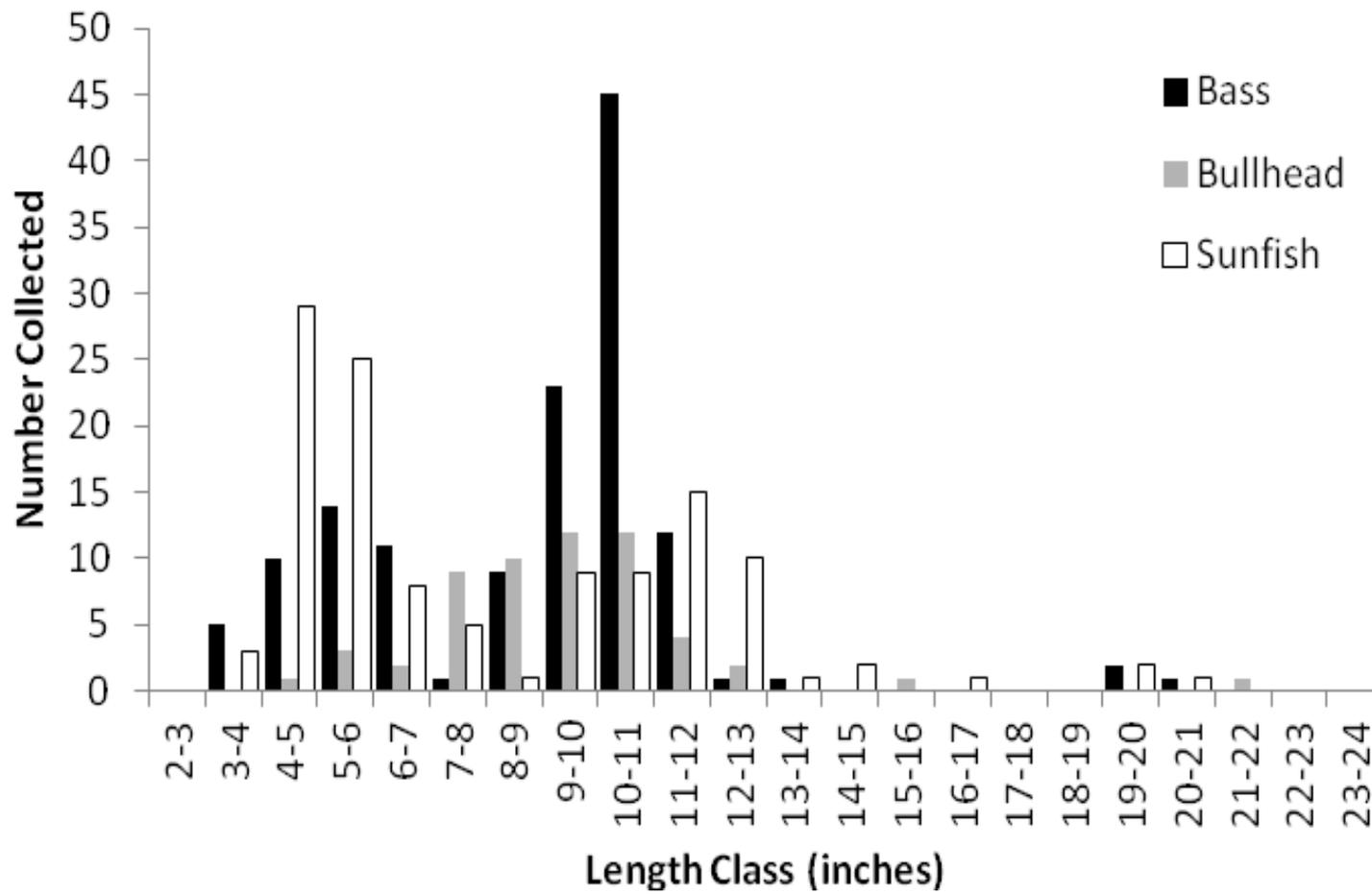


Figure 1. Length distribution of largemouth bass collected from the Powhatan WMA Ponds in 2012.

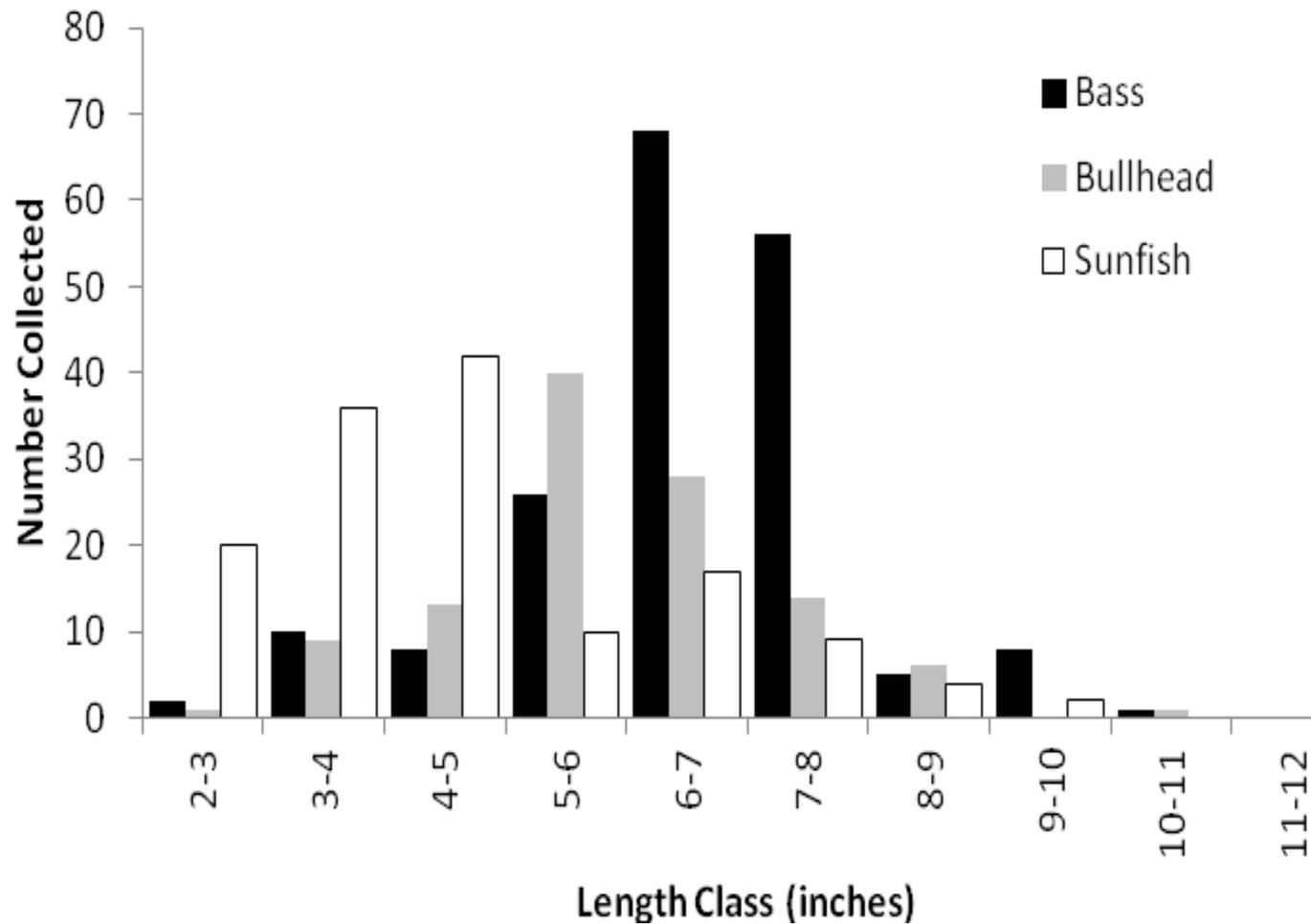


Figure 3. Length distribution of panfish collected throughout the Powhatan WMA Ponds in 2012. Panfish include bluegill, redear sunfish, black crappie, and warmouth sunfish.