

Skidmore Lake (Switzer Dam) Fisheries Management Report 2003

Skidmore Lake is a 118 acre flood control/water supply reservoir that was constructed in 1975. The impoundment is a water supply reservoir owned by the City of Harrisonburg and is located in northwest Rockingham County. The entire watershed of the reservoir is George Washington National Forest land which is managed by the United States Forest Service. Skidmore Reservoir is situated at 2,600' msl and has a maximum depth of 100 feet. Skidmore Lake is unparalleled in beauty due to its remote location and undeveloped shoreline. Almost the entire northern side of the reservoir is accessible for shoreline fishing or anglers can launch boats from an unimproved dirt ramp. Gasoline motors are prohibited, but electric trolling motors are welcome.

Skidmore's excellent water quality and cool/well-oxygenated water makes it a unique reservoir trout fishery. Each winter the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries stocks several thousand fingerling brook trout in the reservoir. Trout do not naturally reproduce in the reservoir therefore annual stocking is necessary to maintain the population. Biologists experimented by stocking different species of trout over the years and brook trout proved to be the most successful. Wild "native" brook trout are found in the headwater tributary streams entering the reservoir. Brook trout up to 16" have been collected by biologists each time the reservoir has been sampled over the past decade. Growth rates of brook trout are excellent with fish approaching 12" one year after being stocked. There are very few places in the southern United States that have habitat conditions suitable to grow 15+ inch brook trout. For this reason Skidmore Lake could be considered a "trophy" brook trout fishery. Gill net sampling in October 2001 revealed a population dominated by fish 12-13 inches (Figure 1). Historically the trout fishery was managed under general statewide trout regulations (7" minimum size ; 6 fish/ day creel). In 2002 the minimum size limit for trout was increased to 10 inches to enhance the trophy potential of the fishery. Analysis of stomach contents reveal that brookies feed predominately on insects and crayfish.

The reservoir is also home to many warmwater fish species. Largemouth bass and rock bass are the two most common warmwater species. Good numbers of largemouth bass are found in Skidmore, but the population is dominated by fish < 12" in length. However, recent electrofishing samples revealed a few bass > 20 inches (Figure 2). Bass growth is relatively slow in the cold waters of Skidmore with fish not reaching 12 inches until age five. Rockbass are prevalent throughout the reservoir, but few are greater than 7 inches long (Figure 3). Black crappie can provide some successful angling. Anglers should target shoreline structure in the spring or underwater ledges in deeper water during the summer months. Small populations of bluegill, green sunfish, channel catfish, and yellow bullhead are also present in Skidmore Lake.

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Skidmore Lake Brook Trout Gill Net Sample October 2001

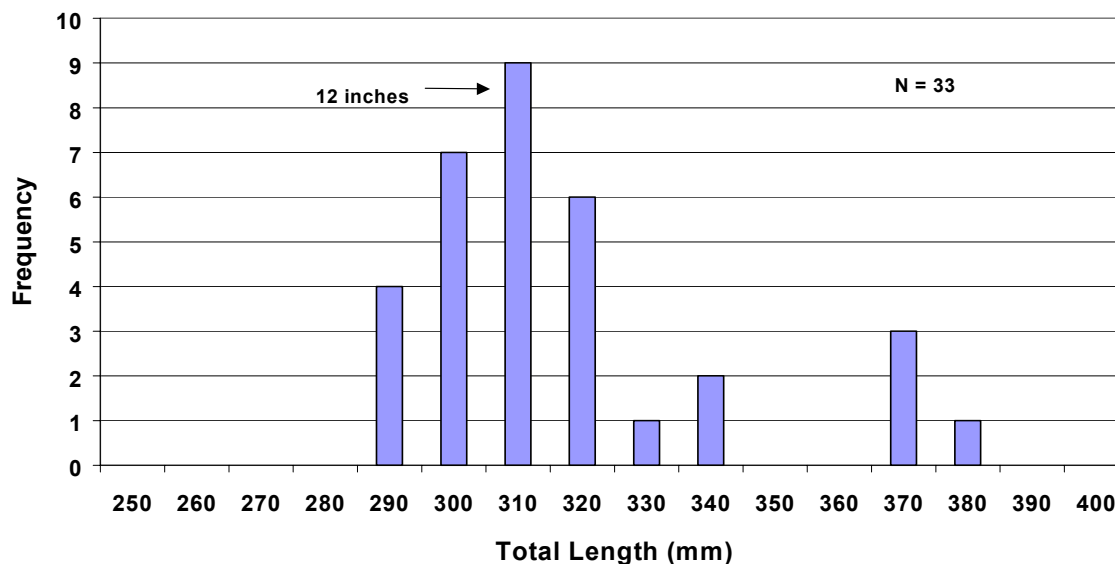


Figure 1. Length frequency of brook trout collected from a gill net sample conducted in October 2001.

Skidmore Lake Largemouth Bass Spring 2002 Electrofishing Sample

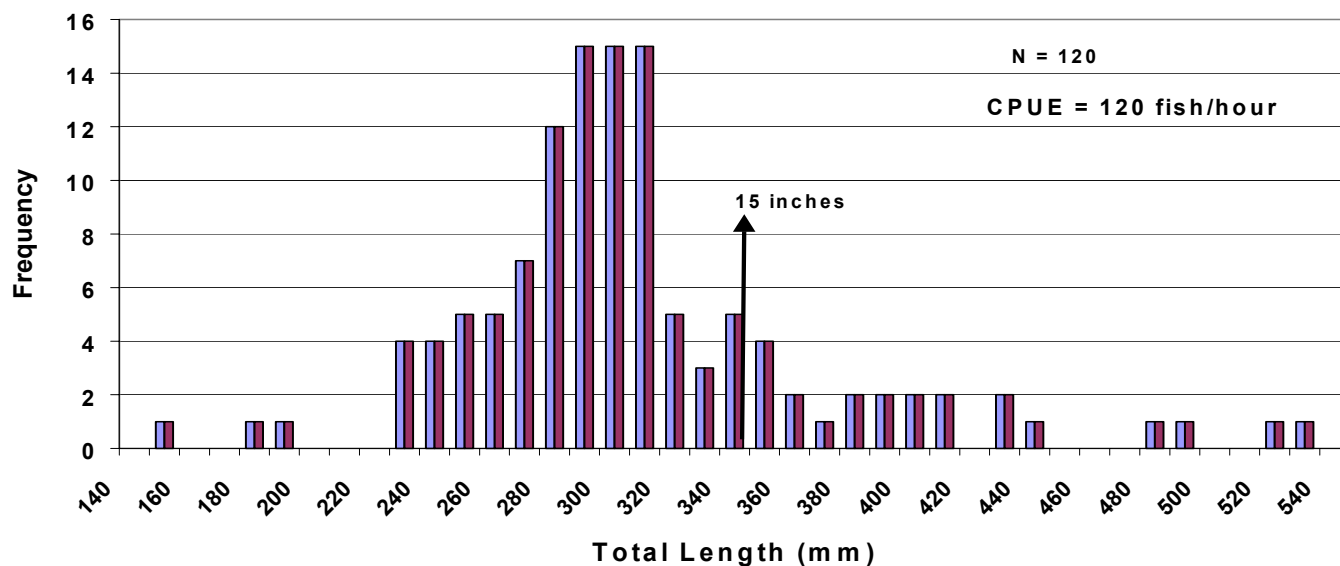


Figure 2. Length frequency of largemouth bass collected from Skidmore Lake May 2002.

**Skidmore Lake Rock Bass Spring 2002
Electrofishing Sample**

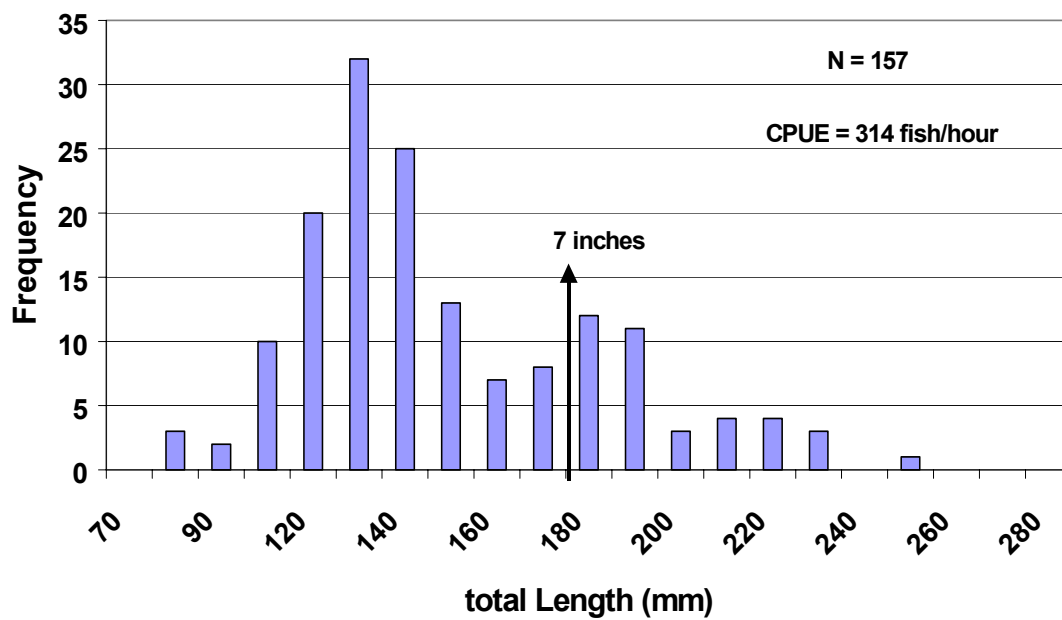


Figure 3. Length frequency of rock bass collected from Skidmore Lake May 2002.