



Powhatan Ponds 2025



NOTICE TO USERS: During the summer of 2023, the control riser of the Sunfish Pond started leaking and caused the lake to drain considerably. At this time, there are no funds or plans to repair the structure and the lake will continue to drain as the pipe continues to erode. The remaining pool is still open to fishing but as the lake drains the surrounding shoreline will be muddy and DWR biologist are occasionally relocating the remaining fish into the other Powhatan Ponds. Be advised, that the area around the control structure is unstable and potentially dangerous. The area has been flagged and fenced, and all visitors should stay away from the control structure on the dam.

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 April 2024, 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 five different fish species were collected from the three Powhatan Ponds (Table 1). Similar to previous surveys, Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, and Redear Sunfish were by far the most abundant species collected in each pond (Table 1). Largemouth Bass are abundant in all the ponds, so anglers should experience good catch rates for bass. Although the numbers are high, the bass populations are poor in terms of the size of fish available to anglers. Each pond is dominated by small bass (< 11 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 also has a high number of bass, especially fish in the 8-to-10-inch range (Figure 1). A few larger bass (> 20 inches) were collected in each pond but they were not very abundant. The largest bass collected in 2024 was from the Bullhead Pond and measures 22 inches and weighed nearly 6 pounds. Based on the 2024 survey, the Bass Pond has the highest potential for anglers to catch a memorable or trophy bass which is likely due to its larger size and suitable bass habitat. Novice anglers and kids searching for fast action should target the high-density bass fisheries in the Bass and Sunfish Ponds. The chance of catching a large bass in any of the three ponds is low but overall catch rates should be very high. Anglers looking to have a better opportunity to catch large bass, should visit the Powhatan Lakes which are located just minutes away from the ponds at the northern end of the Powhatan Wildlife Management Area.

Anglers searching for panfish should have decent catch success for fish at each of the ponds, due to good numbers of Bluegill and Redear Sunfish collected at each lake (Table 1). A small number of Black Crappie were collected but catches of crappie were 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 (< 9 inches, Figure 2). Currently, all the ponds appear to be similar in the size and numbers of sunfish available to anglers. There were a few larger (between 9 and 13 inches) Black Crappie collected in each lake. 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 all ponds (Table 1). Catfish often frequent deeper water making them more difficult to catch with electrofishing gear. All catfish collected were larger than 12 inches with the largest collected measuring greater than 22 inches (average size 16 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. Currently the road to the Sunfish Pond boat landing is closed to vehicles because of vandalism and road erosion.

For more information on the Powhatan Ponds, please contact:

Johnathan Harris
District Fisheries Biologist
Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources
(804) 305-8940

Table 1. Catch rates for fish collected from the Powhatan WMA Ponds in 2024. Note, Sunfish Pond started draining in summer of 2023 due to control tower issues and numbers may not reflect changes in fish populations.

Species	Bass Pond			Bullhead Pond			Sunfish Pond		
	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of the Catch	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of the Catch	Number Collected	Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing)	Percentage of the Catch
Black Crappie	0	0	0	10	43	9	6	15	5
Bluegill	21	58	22	46	197	40	34	83	27
Channel Catfish	8	22	8	1	4	1	9	22	7
Largemouth Bass	55	153	56	16	69	14	59	145	47
Redear Sunfish	14	39	14	41	175	36	17	42	14

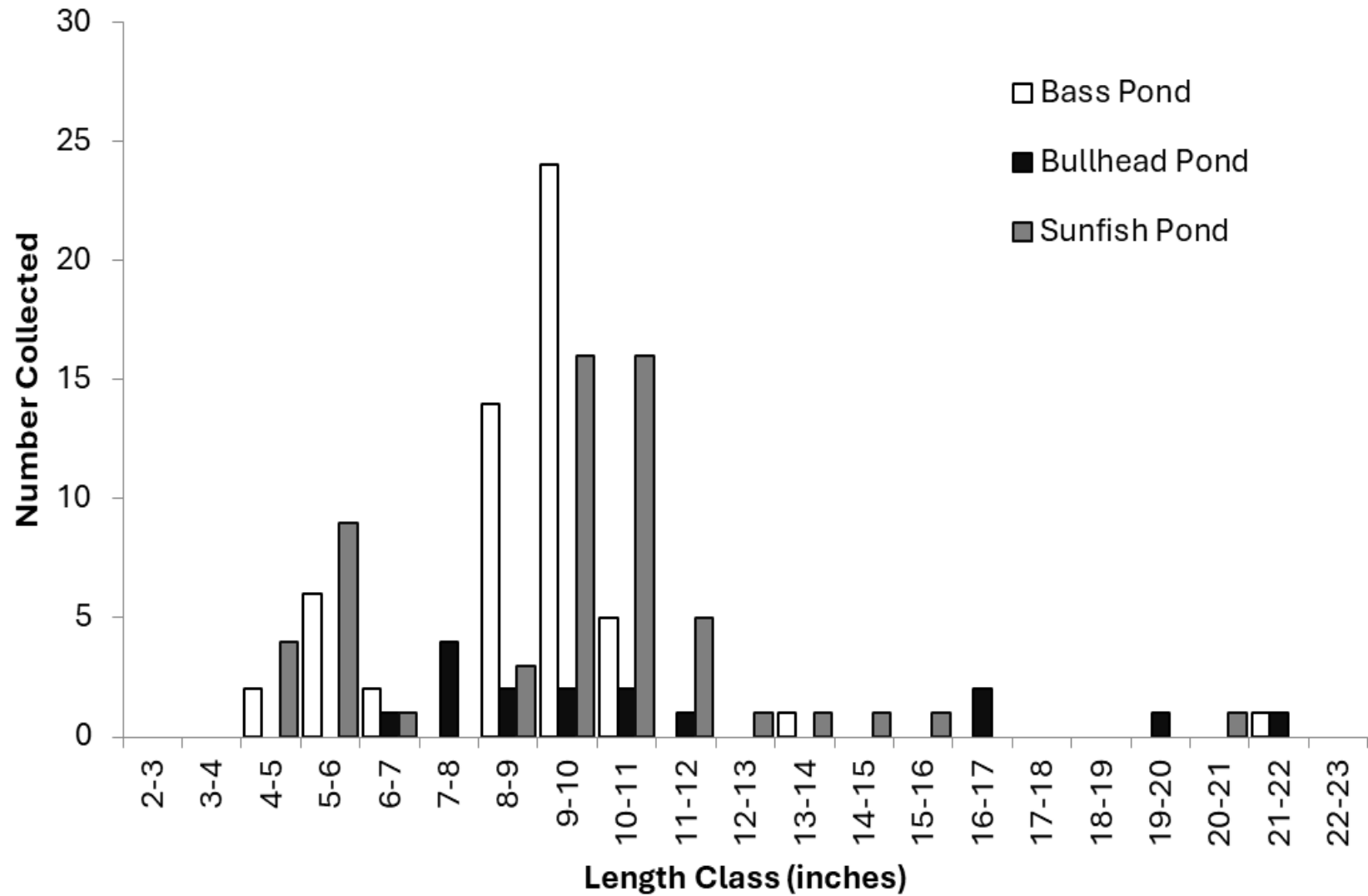


Figure 1. Length distribution of Largemouth Bass collected from the Powhatan WMA Ponds in 2024. Note, Sunfish Pond started draining in summer of 2023 due to control tower issues and size distribution may not reflect changes in bass populations.

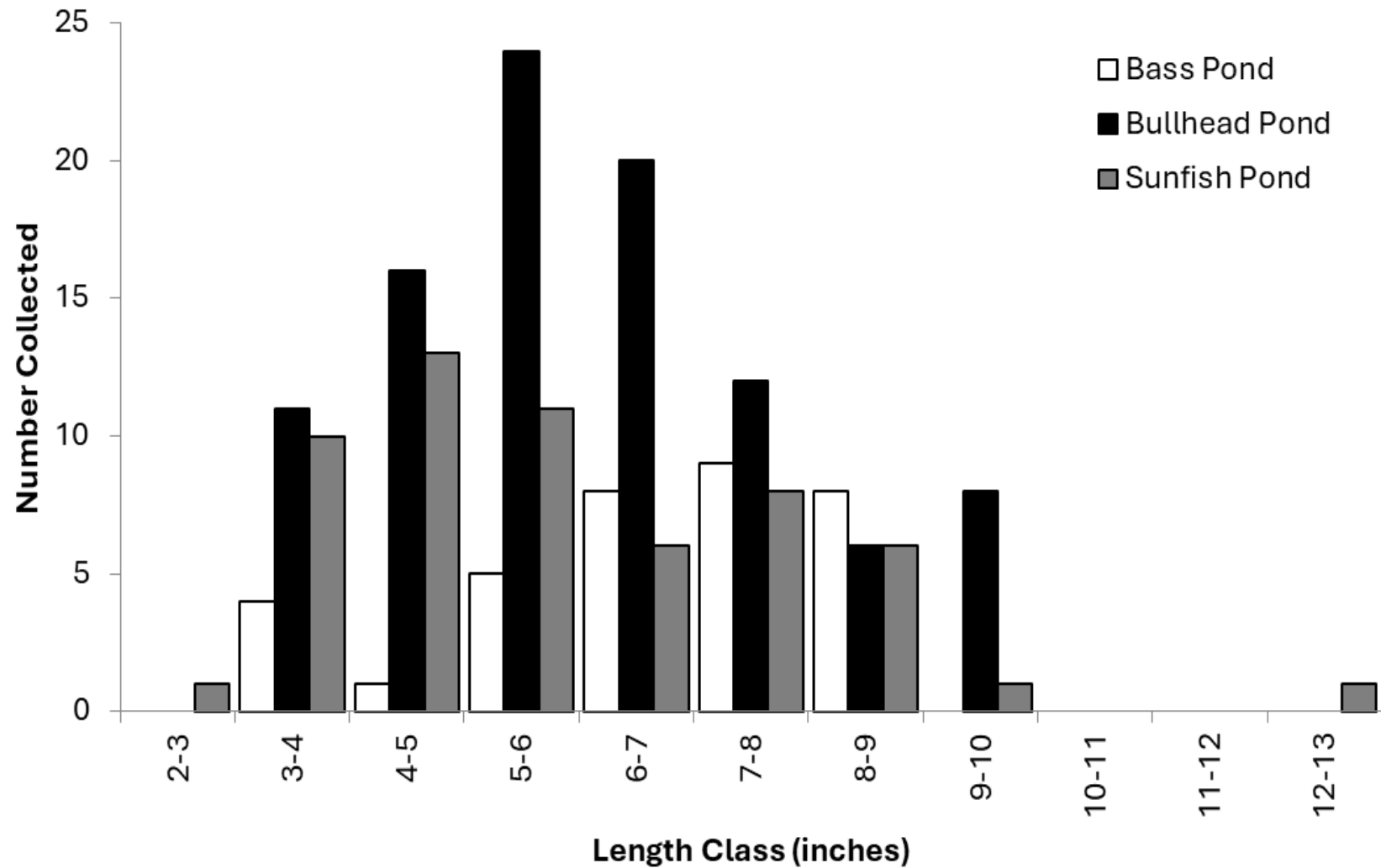


Figure 2. Length distribution of panfish collected throughout the Powhatan WMA Ponds in 2024. Panfish include Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, and Black Crappie. Note, Sunfish Pond started draining in summer of 2023 due to control tower issues and size distribution may not reflect changes in fish populations.