



Lovill's Creek Lake Recreation at the Foot of the Blue Ridge



April 1, 2011

Lovill's Creek Lake is a 55-acre impoundment nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in southern Carroll County only 7 miles from Mount Airy, North Carolina. The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service constructed the lake in 1990 to control flooding and trap sediment from its large watershed, with elevations ranging from 1,150 to 3,160 feet above sea level. In 1990, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) entered a twenty-year management agreement with Carroll County to manage Lovill's Creek Lake for fishing. In 1995, VDGIF constructed a boat ramp and courtesy pier for angler access. VDGIF stocked the lake with largemouth bass, channel catfish, bluegill, and redear sunfish in 1990. Since then, only channel catfish have been stocked every other year. VDGIF biologists conduct frequent spring electrofishing surveys to monitor the fishery.

Fish populations at Lovill’s Creek Lake are sampled using electrofishing. “Electrofishing” is a fish collection technique that uses a boat-mounted generator and voltage regulator to put an electric shock into the water. The shock affects fish near the boat’s electric field, which is limited to an area within a few feet around the boat. “Electroshocked” fish actually swim toward booms dangling off the front of the boat, where they are temporarily stunned and can be netted by biologists. These fish are measured, weighed, and released back into the lake. Length information from collected fish is used to assess spawning and likely angler success. Weights of collected fish are used to assess body condition. Time spent electrofishing is recorded so biologists can measure catch rates of each species and compare this information between years.

What fish can I catch at Lovill’s Creek Lake?

Largemouth bass, bluegill, black crappie, and redear sunfish are all found in Lovill’s Creek Lake. Between 2000 and 2009, these species have reproduced consistently. Electrofishing catch rates for these species have been stable or increasing, so they are not overfished.

Anglers are likely to catch chain pickerel and yellow perch at Lovill’s Creek Lake. Chain pickerel were first collected in 2005 and yellow perch in 2009. Both species were introduced by someone other than VDGIF biologists. Chain pickerel are well established in the lake. Anglers are encouraged to harvest up to 5 chain pickerel per day. The yellow perch population is still expanding. Yellow perch are efficient predators of zooplankton (microscopic animals living in the water), so they directly compete for food with young bluegill and other sunfish and young largemouth bass. **Anglers are encouraged to harvest yellow perch (no size or creel limits), since they negatively affect sunfish and largemouth bass populations.**

Fishing is regulated by posted size and creel limits (which are subject to change). The fishery is currently regulated by the size and creel limits listed below (see Table 1). If you catch a species not listed in this table, consult a VDGIF Fishing regulation book for size and creel limits (<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/fishing/regulations/>).

Table 1: Fishing regulations at Lovill’s Creek Lake

Species	Size Limit	Creel Limit
Bluegill and other sunfish	None	50 per day total
Black Crappie	None	25 per day
Chain Pickerel	None	5 per day
Channel Catfish	None	20 per day
Largemouth Bass	12 to 15 inch slot limit (12 to 15 inch bass must be released)	5 per day under 12 inches or over 15 inches (combined)
Yellow Perch	None	None

Largemouth Bass

Fishing for largemouth bass is a key feature of Lovill's Creek Lake. Largemouth bass are abundant and in good condition. Largemouth bass sizes during electrofishing from 2005 to 2009 were consistent. In spring 2009, 61 percent of the adult largemouth bass (over 8 inches long) collected were over 12 inches long and 5 percent of the adult largemouth bass were over 15 inches long (Figure 1). Anglers will find good numbers of 12 to 15 inch largemouth bass in the lake. With the 12 to 15 inch slot limit in place, anglers will find plenty of larger bass in the lake in the next 2 to 3 years.

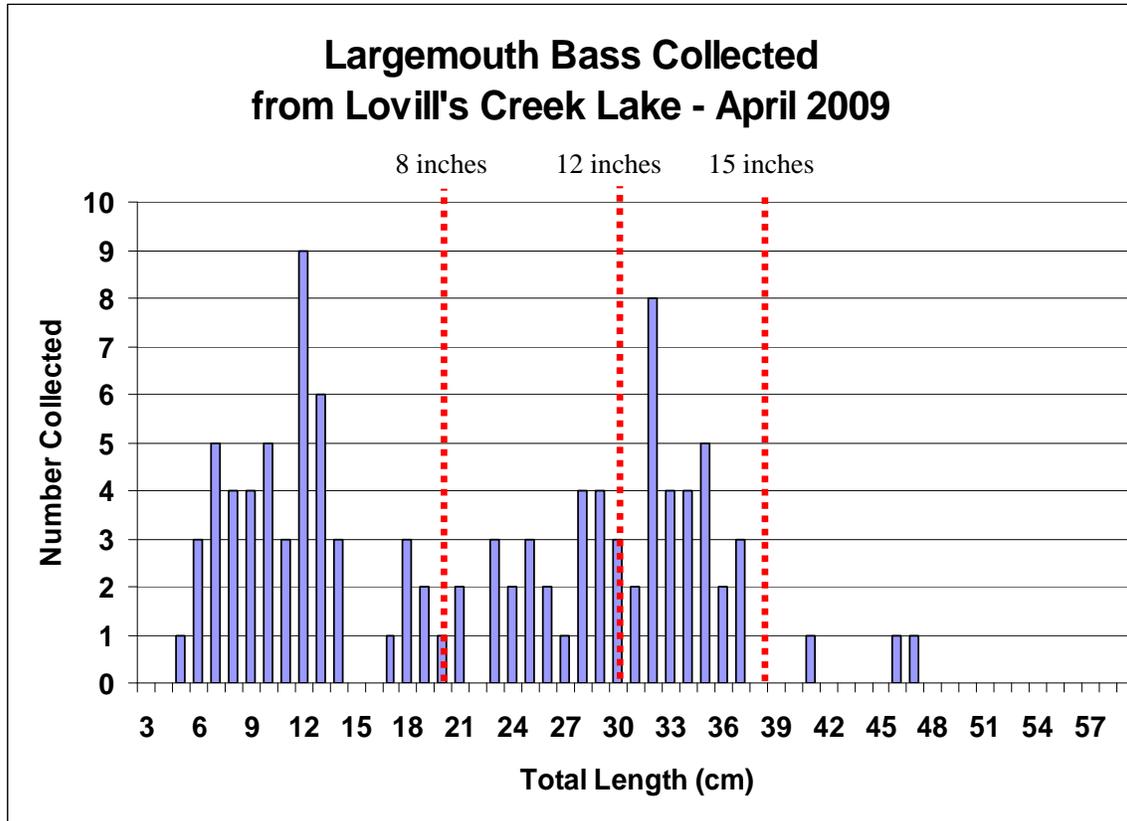


Figure 1: Largemouth Bass collected during a spring 2009 electrofishing sample.

Panfish

Bluegill are the most abundant sunfish in Lovill's Creek Lake. Unfortunately, few bluegill over 8 inches are available. Redear sunfish are larger. In fact, 31% of the redear sunfish collected in spring 2009 electrofishing were between 8 and 11 inches long (Figure 2). Catching large sunfish at the lake is easiest during the peak spawning time between mid-April and mid-May. When fishing at other times of the year, look for sunfish in deeper water near woody debris.

Black crappie size ranges in spring 2009 were excellent, with 47 percent of the adult crappie (over 5 inches) over 8 inches long, and 13 percent of the adult crappie over 10 inches long (Figure 3). These size ranges make Lovill's Creek Lake the best small lake for crappie fishing in the New River Valley management district. Crappie fishing is

best from late March to mid-April, when spawning fish move to shallow areas of the lake. Black crappie can also be caught year-round at beaver lodges on the lake.

Figure 2: Redear sunfish collected during an April 2009 electrofishing sample.

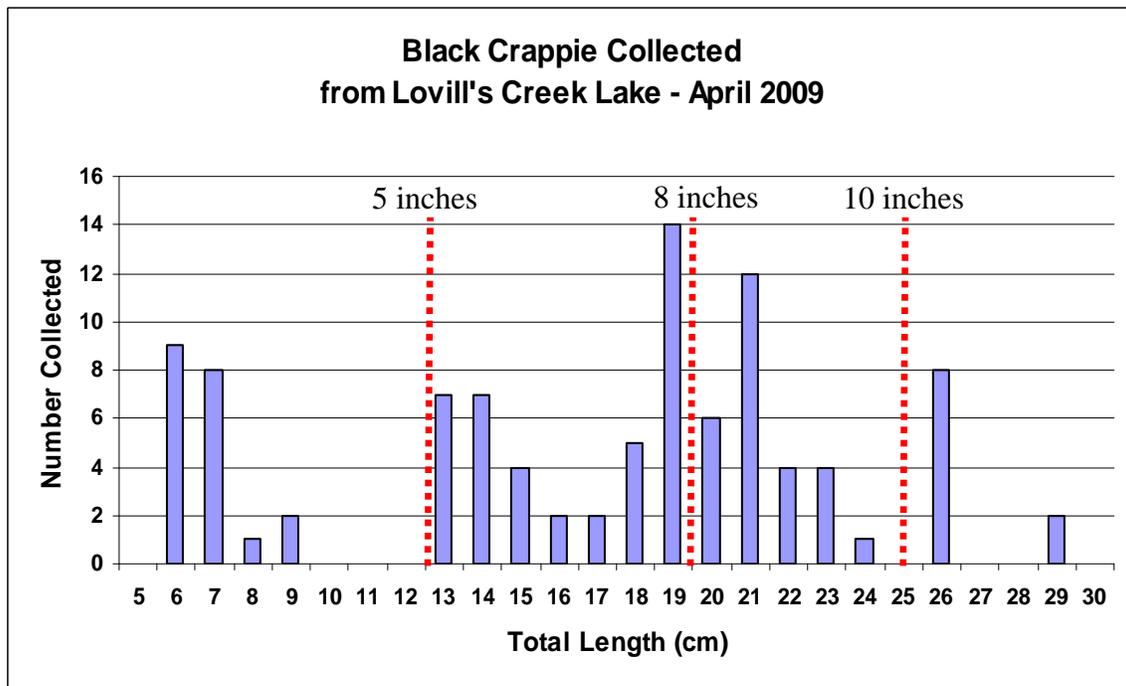
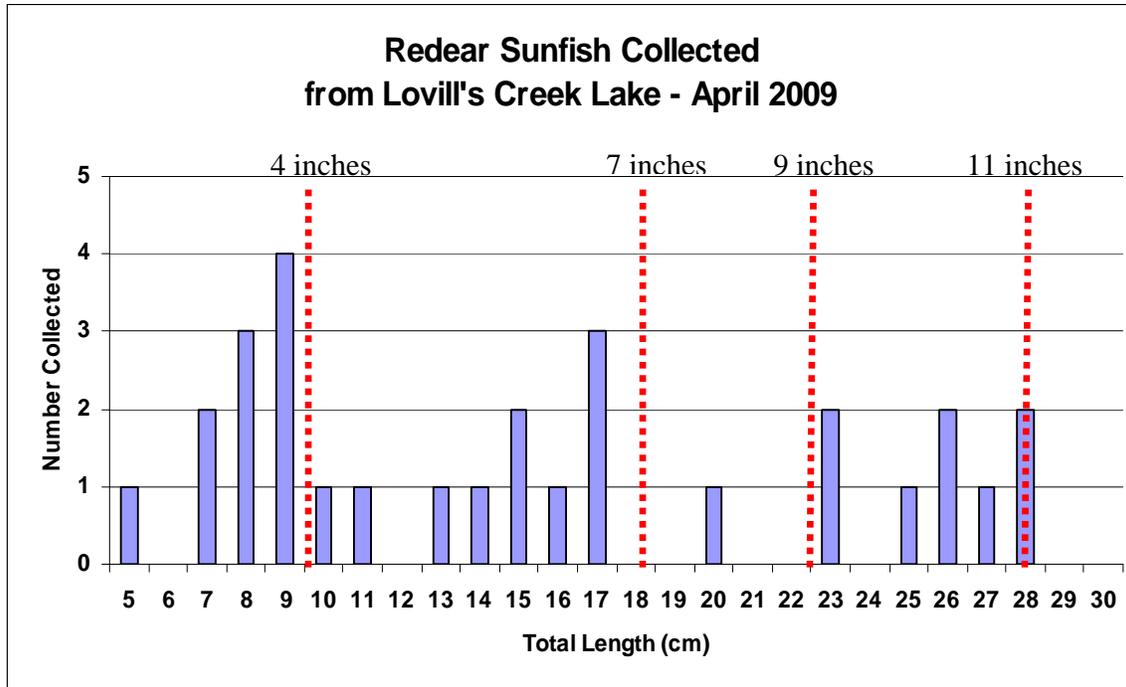


Figure 3: Black crappie collected during an April 2009 electrofishing sample.

Species Introductions at Lovill's Creek Lake

Chain pickerel are not native to the watershed of Lovill's Creek Lake, so their source in the lake is unknown. While they are not having impacts in the lake, they could have impacts downstream in North Carolina waters. Yellow perch were first collected in spring 2009. Their numbers were high (46 yellow perch per hour of electrofishing), but lower than densities observed at Gatewood Reservoir, where we collected 82 per hour of electrofishing in spring 2005. Largemouth bass in Lovill's Creek Lake will eat yellow perch and help control their numbers, but the impacts of their introduction on bluegill and redear sunfish will still occur. Bluegill body condition declined in the 2009 electrofishing sample, a likely impact of the yellow perch introduction.

In September 2009, an angler reported catching a white perch from Lovill's Creek Lake. Since he was not sure if the fish was legal to keep, he returned it to the lake. The angler was contacted and accompanied a fisheries biologist on a sampling trip to the lake. During that outing, a single white perch was collected by electrofishing. VDGIF biologists will do additional sampling in spring 2010 to determine if white perch are established in the lake.



Brad Mawyer displays photos of the white perch he caught (top) and the one he captured using electrofishing (bottom).

Unfortunately, once species introductions occur, there is little VDGIF fisheries biologists can do to reverse the impacts. A new species established in a lake can quickly spread downstream during high water or by anglers moving them elsewhere. Even species like chain pickerel, yellow perch, and white perch, which are common in some areas of Virginia, can have negative impacts when introduced outside their native range. More information on impacts of introduced fishes is available in a Virginia Wildlife article authored by John Copeland, VDGIF fisheries biologist (copies available by email request from John.Copeland@dgif.virginia.gov).

What else can I do when I visit Lovill's Creek Lake?

Downstream from the dam, Lovill's Creek offers the unique opportunity to fish for trout on a seasonal basis. This one mile section of stream is stocked 2 times between October 1 and April 30. Anglers fishing this section of stream must possess a trout stamp in addition to their regular fishing license between October 1 and June 15. A picnic shelter is available from 7AM to 10PM by reservation through the Carroll County Administrator's Office at (276) 730 – 3001. Restrooms are available at the Carroll County waste management facility near the lake's entrance.



Why not dip a line for trout in Lovill's Creek downstream from the dam?

More Information and Location

Lovill's Creek Lake is located south of Cana on Route 686. To reach the lake from Route 52 south of Fancy Gap, take Route 687 to Route 686. From Rt. 52 at the North Carolina state line, travel north, then go east on Rt. 686 to the lake entrance. The lake is open for fishing year-round, 24 hours a day. Gas-powered boats are not allowed, so boats must be powered by an electric motor. Non-motorized watercraft may be used. Other lake regulations are posted at the lake. Non-resident anglers 12 years and older must have a valid fishing license. Non-resident anglers under age 12 do not need a fishing license when accompanied by a properly licensed adult.

For more information, contact the Carroll County Tourism office at (276) 730-3100 or John Copeland, VDGIF Fisheries Biologist, Blacksburg Office, phone (540) 961-8304, email: John.Copeland@dgif.virginia.gov.