



Columbus Lake 2018

REEL FACTS

Trevor Knight– Fisheries Biologist (Tupelo)
TrevorK@mdwfp.state.ms.us (662) 840-5176

General Information: Covering 8,910 acres, Columbus Lake is the largest reservoir along the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. It was opened in 1981 and is owned and managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The reservoir extends 22 miles from Aberdeen Lock and Dam (mile 357.5) to Columbus Lock and Dam (Stennis Lock and Dam, mile 334.7). Historically, Columbus Lake has been a popular destination for bass and crappie anglers from around the state and the west central region of Alabama.

Location: Just west of the Columbus, MS along Lock and Dam Rd., east of West Point along Hwy. 50.

Fishery Management: Largemouth Bass, crappie, catfish, and Paddlefish.

Purchase a Fishing License: https://www.ms.gov/mdwfp/hunting_fishing/

Amenities

- 8 public boat ramps
- 2 marinas
- 3 campgrounds
- Picnic Areas
- Restrooms

Regulations

- Black bass (largemouth and spotted): 14 inch minimum length limit, 10 bass (combined) per day per angler.
- Crappie: 9 inch minimum length limit and 30 crappie limit per day per angler.
- Bream: 100 bream (combined) per day per angler.
- Catfish: no limit.
- All paddlefish caught must be released
- Other creel limits can be found at <http://www.mdwfp.com>

Regulations

Yo-Yo's, Juqs, and Trotlines

- No more than 25 jugs and no more than 25 yo-yos may be fished per person. No more than 2 hooks are allowed on each device. Trotlines may have no more than 100 single hooks.

Handgrabbing

- Hand grabbing season for catfish is open May 1 to July 15 each year.

Spillway

- Anglers can only use on pole or rod per person.
- Artificial lures with no more than 3 treble hooks no larger than #2 may be used anytime.
- The use of baited or bare treble hooks is illegal.
- From Dec 1 until the last day in Feb – Anglers can only fish with 2 single hooks no larger than #2. Hooks must be at least 1 inch apart.
- From March 1 until the last day in Nov – Anglers may fish with 2 single hooks of any size. Hooks must be at least 1 inch apart.

Sportfishing Notes

Black Bass

- Target deeper backwater areas with woody debris and aquatic vegetation with Texas-rigged plastics, square-billed crankbaits, spinnerbaits, and jigs.
- In the spring, target backwater flats with spinnerbaits, Texas-rigs, vibrating jigs, and weedless swimbaits.

Crappie

- Target the deep old river bendways with jigs and minnows around any woody cover.
- Fish the edges of vegetation in the lower end of the lake around the gravel pits and Tibbee Creek.

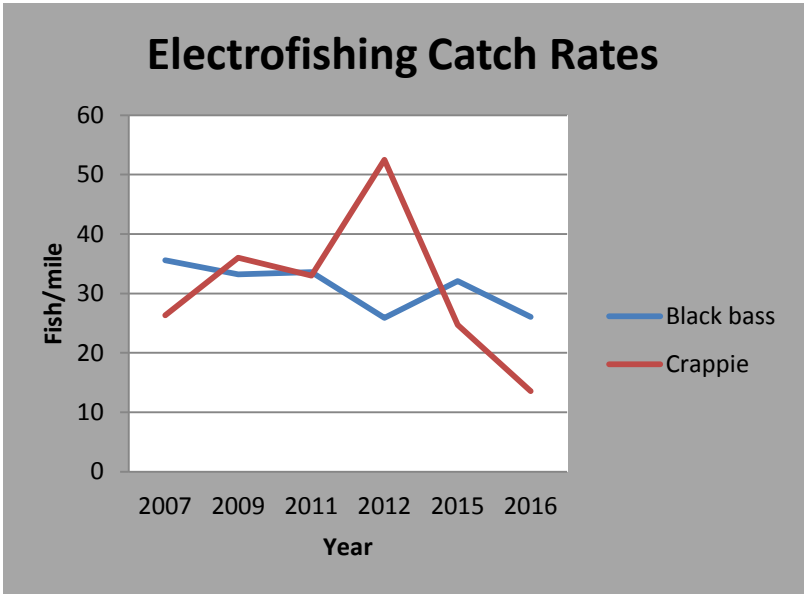
Catfish

- Fish for cats along main channel drop-offs, mouths of bendways, and deep old river channels with cutbait or whole shad.

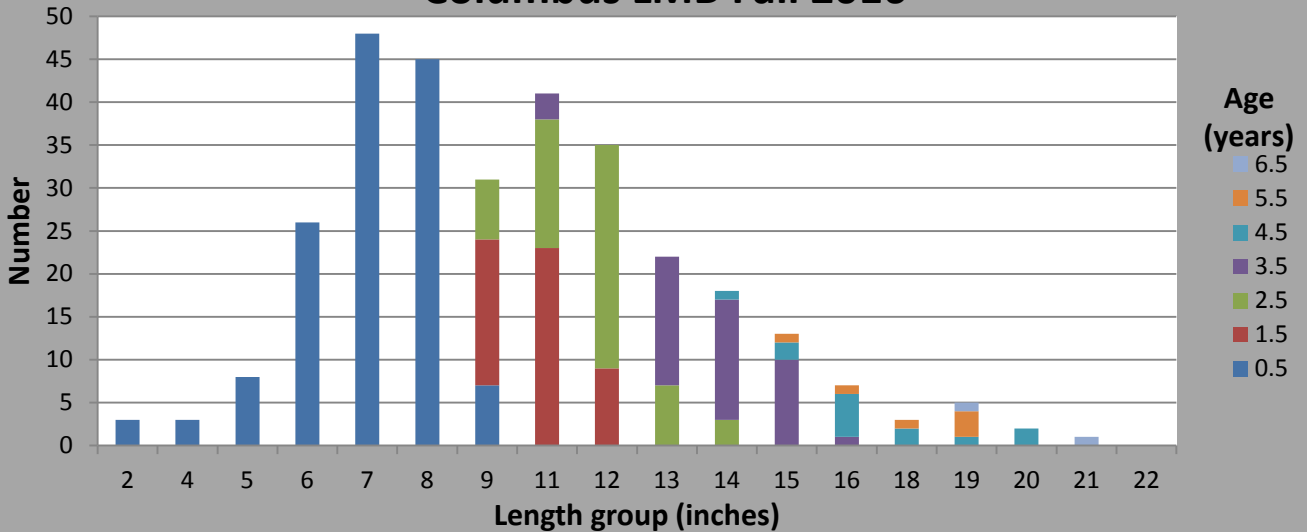
Below: Results from the 2016 fall electrofishing survey on Columbus Lake. Boat electrofishing was completed along 9.3 miles of shoreline at 15 random samples during December.

Species	# of Fish Sampled	% of Sample	Average Length (inches)	Minimum Length (inches)	Maximum Length (inches)	Catch Rate Adult fish (fish/mile)
Largemouth Bass	312	29.2	10.6	3.2	22.5	22.5
Threadfin Shad	236	22	2.6	1.9	3.5	-
Bluegill	209	19.5	4.7	1.9	8.1	20.7
Gizzard Shad	122	11.4	5.8	2.7	11.4	3.6
White Crappie	99	9.2	10.7	3.4	16.1	10.3
Black Crappie	30	2.8	9.3	5.7	13.1	3.2
Redear Sunfish	28	2.6	5.9	3.1	7.7	2.8
Spotted Bass	13	1.2	8.6	3.1	13.7	0.8
Longear Sunfish	10	0.9	3.5	3.1	4.3	1.1
White Bass	9	0.8	11.4	9.7	13.8	0.9

Below: Electrofishing catch rates (fish/mile) for black bass (Largemouth and Spotted Bass) and crappie. These statistics are for Largemouth Bass 8 inches and longer, Spotted Bass 7 inches and longer, and crappie 5 inches and longer. The catch rates for these species have slowly declined over the last decade. It's not uncommon for catch rates to change over time as populations naturally fluctuate from year to year.



Columbus LMB Fall 2016



Above: Age at length for Largemouth Bass collected during 2016 fall electrofishing survey. Forty-five percent of the bass collected were less than one year old, and 48% of the fish were 1.5–3.5 years old. Largemouth Bass in Columbus Lake exhibit high growth rates during early life stages. The oldest fish aged were 6.5 years old. Growth rates calculated in 2016 were similar to historical growth rates in Columbus Lake. In addition to high growth rates, Columbus Lake bass also display high mortality rates at an annual average of 48%.

Left: Trophy catfish angling has become more and more popular in recent years. Columbus lake boasts a healthy population of trophy Flathead Catfish. Catfishing tournaments have also grown in popularity as well. Columbus not only hosts catfish tournaments, but also numerous bass and crappie tournaments throughout every year.



Species targeted	Percentage (%)
Bass	45
Crappie	47
Catfish	8
Party Size	
1	40
2	55
>3	5
Have you been interviewed on Columbus in 2016?	
Yes	15
No	85
How many years have you been fishing on the Tenn-Tom?	
0-2 years	9
2-10 years	20
11-20 years	17
20+ years	54
Since you started fishing the Tenn-Tom, do you believe the fishing has gotten:	
Better	32
Worse	45
No difference	23
What action do you think is most needed to improve fishing on the Tenn-Tom?	
Improve habitat	51
Stricter regulations	22
Less regulations	5
Stocking	22



Above: Ninety-two percent of the anglers interviewed were targeting either bass or crappie. Similarly, 95% of the anglers were fishing in a party of two or less. Over half the anglers interviewed had been fishing the Tenn-Tom for 20 or more years. From the anglers perspective, 45 percent thought that fishing had gotten worse since they started fishing the Tenn-Tom while only 32 percent thought it had improved. A little over half the anglers interviewed thought that “habitat improvement” would be the best way to improve fishing, while 22 percent thought that stricter regulations and stocking would be the most beneficial.

Right: Length of crappie harvested by anglers at Columbus Lake during the spring of 2016. Crappie anglers harvested an average of 60.6% of their catch. The average length of Crappie harvested in 2016 was 10.8 inches.

