



# Columbus Lake 2021

## REEL FACTS

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**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/](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, Jugs, 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.

#### 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.
- Baitfish captured at Aberdeen or Columbus spillways must be immediately placed on ice or in a dry container.

### 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.

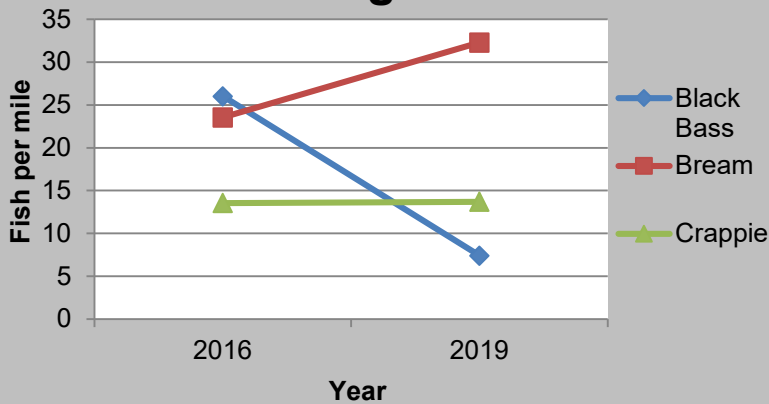
#### Catfish

- 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 2019 fall electrofishing survey on Columbus Lake. Boat electrofishing was completed along 6.2 miles of shoreline at 10 random samples during December.

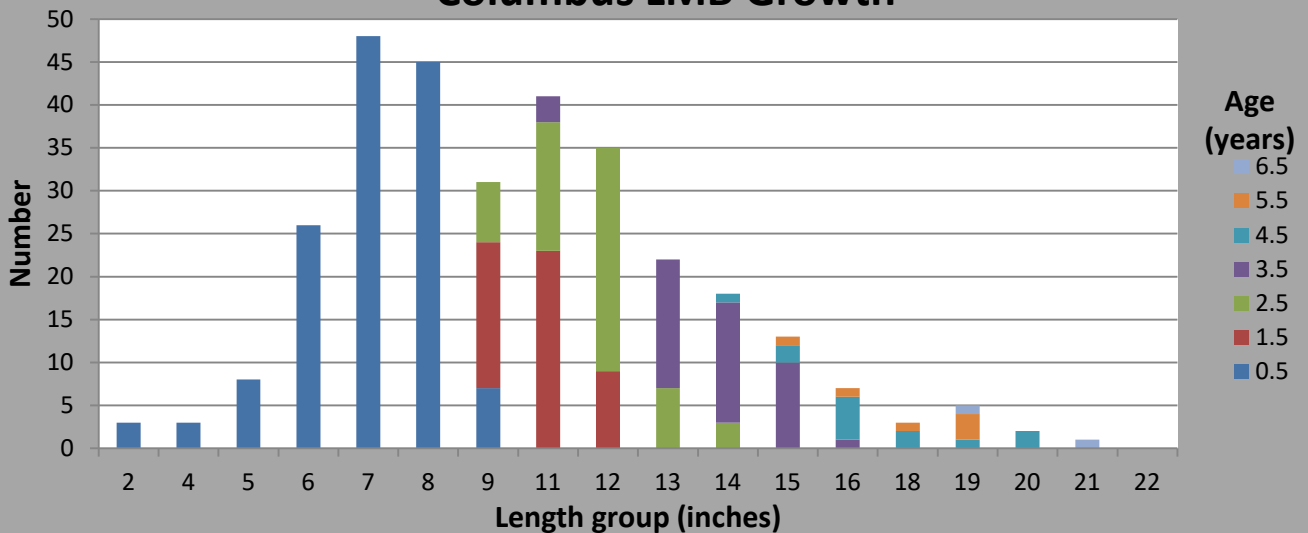
Species	# of Fish Sampled	% of Sample	Average Length (inches)	Minimum Length (inches)	Maximum Length (inches)	Catch Rate Adult fish (fish/mile)
Gizzard Shad	54	10	6	3.2	11.8	2
Threadfin Shad	46	8	2.3	1.2	3.2	-
Blue Catfish	15	3	17.9	8.5	28.2	2
Channel Catfish	18	3	5.9	1.2	19.8	1
White Bass	1	<1	10.1	10.1	10.1	<1
Green Sunfish	5	1	5.4	4.3	6.3	1
Warmouth	6	1	4.2	3.5	5.2	1
Orange-spotted Sunfish	1	<1	2	2	2	-
Bluegill	222	40	4.1	1.2	7.1	31
Longear Sunfish	2	<1	3.5	3.2	3.9	<1
Redear Sunfish	7	1	4.9	2.4	6.6	1
Spotted Bass	3	<1	13.3	7	17.9	<1
Largemouth Bass	80	14	9.3	3.6	20.1	7
White Crappie	86	15	9.2	3.1	14.4	12
Black Crappie	11	2	9.1	6.1	12.4	2
Walleye	1	<1	7.6	7.6	7.6	-

## Electrofishing Catch Rates



**Left:** Electrofishing catch rates (fish/mile) for black bass (Largemouth and Spotted Bass), bream, 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 rate for crappie has remained consistent, while the bream catch rate showed a significant increase. Black bass catch rates were much lower in 2019, but it's not uncommon for catch rates to change over time as populations naturally fluctuate from year to year.

## Columbus LMB Growth



**Above:** Age at length for Largemouth Bass collected during the fall. 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 have remained relatively stable over the years 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	72
Crappie	22
Catfish	6
<b>Have you been interviewed on Columbus in 2019?</b>	
Yes	15
No	85
<b>Since you started fishing the Tenn-Tom, do you believe the fishing has gotten:</b>	
Better	38
Worse	38
No difference	24
<b>What action do you think is most needed to improve fishing on the Tenn-Tom?</b>	
Improve habitat	59
Stricter regulations	19
Less regulations	1
Stocking	21



**Above:** Ninety-four percent of the anglers interviewed were targeting either bass or crappie. From the anglers’ perspective, it was an even split between anglers who thought fishing had gotten worse and those who thought it had gotten better, both at 38 percent. Fifty-nine percent of anglers interviewed thought that “habitat improvement” would be the best way to improve fishing, while 40 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 in 2016 and 2019. The average length of Crappie harvested in 2016 was 10.8 inches and 11.2 inches in 2019.

