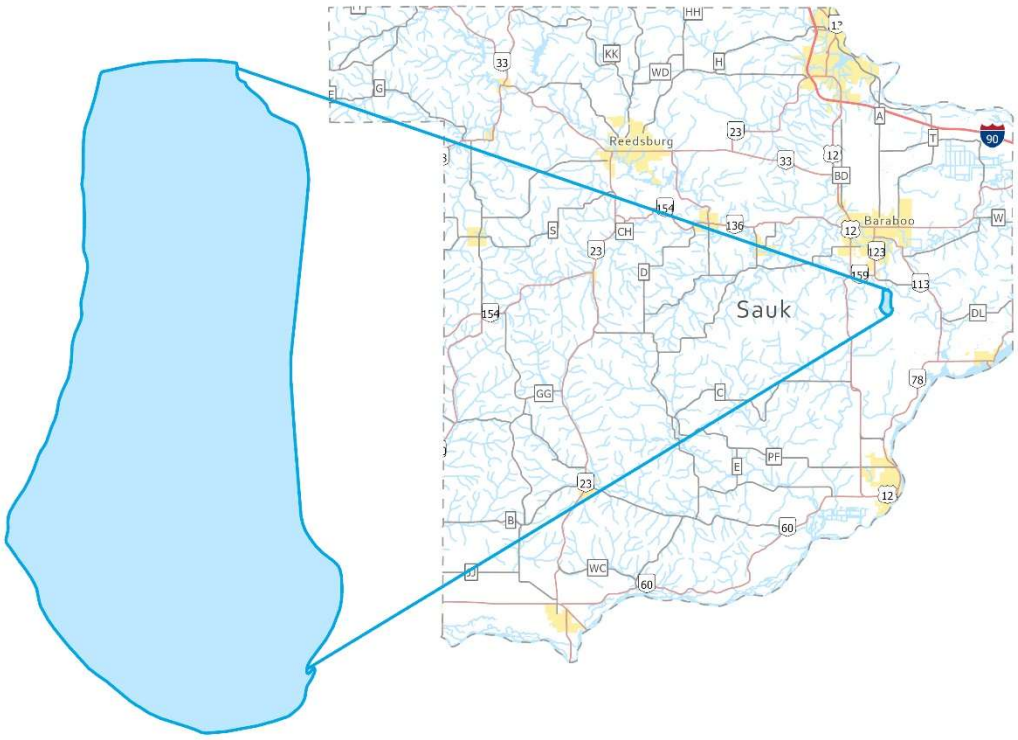
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Comprehensive Fishery Survey of Devils Lake

Sauk County, Wisconsin 2024



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A comprehensive fishery survey was conducted on Devils Lake during the spring of 2024. The survey included early fyke netting to mark and recapture northern pike (SN1), late spring electrofishing for bass and panfish (SE2) and a late spring fyke netting survey (SN3) to collect more panfish which were not collected in sufficient numbers for meaningful data analysis during SN1 and SE2. Northern pike, largemouth bass and smallmouth bass were present at moderate to high abundance compared to other lakes in the complex-two-story lake class. Bluegill, yellow perch and black crappie were present at low abundance compared to the rest of the lake class.

Abundances of bluegill, yellow perch and black crappie were all at or just below the 25th percentile for the lake class. Abundance of larger bluegills was good compared to other area lakes based on size-specific electrofishing catch rates. Growth of all three species was excellent, with mean length-at-age values higher than area and state averages and lake class median values. Devils Lake has the best growth potential for bluegill and yellow perch in the area with some bluegills reaching 10 inches and some perch reaching 15 inches.

Largemouth abundance was high, placing well above the 75th percentile for the lake class, and this was unchanged from 2013. Largemouth bass growth was poor, with the lowest mean length at age 6 of any lake in Columbia and Sauk counties. Despite poor growth, population size structure improved markedly from 2013 based on proportional size distribution (PSD) values. Smallmouth bass catch per unit effort (CPUE) was markedly lower than in 2013 but was still high for the lake class. Smallmouth bass growth was poor, with mean length-at-age values that were below area and state averages and lake class median values.

Northern Pike fyke net CPUE in 2024 was lower than in 2013. However, the Schnabel mark-recapture population estimate in 2024 (319 adult fish or 0.8 adults/acre) was higher than in 2013 (204 adult fish or 0.5 adults/acre). Northern pike growth was excellent; mean length-at-age values were at or above area and state averages and lake class medians for all observed ages. Northern pike averaged over 32 inches (minimum length limit) by age 6. Northern pike population size structure was excellent, ranking first out of all area lakes for PSD-28, PSD-34 and PSD-40. In total, an impressive 14% of northern pike sampled were larger than 40 inches.

Future Management Recommendations

1. Reduce the daily bag limit for panfish from 25 fish to 10 fish per day.
2. Retain the existing fishing regulations for all other species.
3. Future comprehensive fishery surveys should utilize late spring fyke netting (SN3) in deeper water on offshore weed beds in addition to SN1 and SE2 to fulfill bluegill data needs.

4. Largemouth bass growth is an important variable for management of the species in Devils Lake and otoliths should be used to age largemouth bass in future comprehensive surveys of Devils Lake because of the high accuracy and precision of age estimates derived from otoliths.
5. Stock 5,000 yearling feral brown trout in Devils Lake annually to support the two-story trout fishery.
6. Stock surplus feral broodstock brown trout and brook trout up to 2,500 per species, per year to support the two-story trout fishery.

General Lake Information

Lake & location

Devils Lake, Town of Baraboo, Sauk County
T11N, R6E, Sections 13, 24 and 25
Waterbody Identification Code (WBIC): 980900

Physical/chemical attributes

- **Morphometry:** 374 acres, maximum depth of 47 feet, average depth of 30 feet, 3.4 miles of shoreline. Lake volume (surface area x mean depth) 11,211 acre feet.
- **Watershed:** 3.1 square miles
- **Lake type:** Seepage; no natural outlet.
- **Water Clarity:** Clear
- **Littoral substrate:** 50% sand, 30% gravel, 20% muck
- **Trophic status:** Mesotrophic
- **Aquatic vegetation:** A 2007 WDNR survey indicated 13 aquatic plant species present in the lake, with Robbins pondweed, common waterweed, and coontail the most prevalent species in terms of relative frequency. Eurasian watermilfoil was found at only one of 248 sample sites. Robbins pondweed has been the dominant species consistently since 1974.
- **Winterkill:** Infrequent
- **Boat Landings:** Two public boat access points exist on the lake including a carry-in launch on the north shore and a two-lane concrete launch with a docking pier (seasonally) on the south shore. Both are managed by Devils Lake State Park.
- **Other Features:** Devils Lake is the centerpiece of Devils Lake State Park which sees an average of 2.5 million visitors annually, making it the most visited state park in Wisconsin.

Purpose of survey

Baseline lake survey Tier 1 assessment.

Dates of fieldwork

- Fyke netting survey conducted March 4 through March 14 and March 26 through April 12, 2024 (SN1), and June 3 through June 6, 2024 (SN3)
- Spring electrofishing survey conducted May 23, 2024 (SE2)

Fishery

Largemouth bass were abundant. Rock bass were common. Northern pike, yellow perch, bluegill and black crappies were present. Brown trout are stocked to provide a two-story fishery.

Introduction

Devils Lake is a 374-acre seepage lake that also receives surface water inputs from a small stream (officially unnamed, unofficially known as Messenger Creek, WBIC 1632311) that drains a small, forested watershed and enters the lake on the southwest shore. Devils Lake has no surface outlet, and much of the surrounding watershed is impervious rock, so surface runoff inputs during storms and snowmelt events have caused large fluctuations in lake levels over the years. Historically the lake level fluctuated 2.6 feet annually on average, and a range of fluctuation of 11 feet has been observed (1965 minimum, 1973 maximum) since record keeping began (House 1985). The lake was formerly part of the Wisconsin River and was formed during the last ice age when glaciers deposited terminal moraines at the north and south ends of the lake. The Wisconsin River formed a new channel to the east, and the lake was left behind. The lake has steep rocky bluffs rising along the east, west, and south shores, and there are public beaches along the north and southeast shores. Martin (1916) provides a much more in-depth account of the geologic history and origin of Devils Lake.

Because it has a small watershed that is mostly forested with no agricultural inputs, Devils Lake historically had clear water, and algal blooms were not an issue. However, thanks to the ease of travel offered by the railroads Devils Lake became increasingly popular in the 1860s with up to four resorts and 60 or more private cottages around the lake shore (Lathrop et al. 2004). It is assumed that the outhouses and primitive septic systems associated with these installments leached phosphorous into Devils Lake (Lathrop et al. 2004). A small amount of farm runoff coming from the southwest bluff likely contributed phosphorous as well (Lathrop et al. 2004). Expansion of Devils Lake State Park following its inception in 1911 has seen the disappearance of the resorts, and the number of private cottages along the shore is down to four, while agricultural runoff has been eliminated as well (Lathrop et al. 2004). A sewer main in Devils Lake State Park broke in the late 1970s and the resulting sewage leak contributed phosphorous to the lake until the sewer main was repaired in the early 1980s (Lathrop et al. 2004). These nutrient inputs increased the productivity of the lake, and algal blooms became more common.

Thermal stratification occurs in Devils Lake; the depth of the epilimnion increases from 18 to 20 feet in early summer to 30 feet by late summer, and the temperature in the hypolimnion varies from 48 to 53° F (Lillie and Mason 1986). The thermocline begins to erode by late September and full mixing is established by late November (Lillie and Mason 1986). Water clarity has been historically good to excellent when compared to other lakes in Wisconsin, though clarity generally declines from early to late summer (Lillie and Mason 1986). Dissolved oxygen in the hypolimnion declines through the early summer and becomes depleted by July (Lathrop et al. 2005). Once this occurs insoluble iron (Fe^{+3}) compounds in the sediments are reduced to a soluble form (Fe^{+2}), and the phosphorous bound to these compounds is released into the water (Lathrop et al. 2005). This phosphorous is contained in the hypolimnion until fall turnover, when it becomes mixed throughout the water column (Lathrop et al. 2005). This phosphorous enrichment led to increases in algal growth (phytoplankton, filamentous algae, periphyton), including noxious blue-green algal blooms (Lathrop et al. 2005). By the early 1990s, phytoplankton blooms became less severe, but dense mats of filamentous algae covered the bottom which smothered aquatic macrophytes (Lathrop et al. 2004).

With the problem of raw sewage entering Devils Lake corrected, removal of hypolimnetic water was recommended following a study of the lake in 1986-87 (WDNR 1988). Planning began in 2000 for the implementation of a system for removal of phosphorous from the lake via pumping of hypolimnetic water in late summer and early fall (Lathrop et al. 2005). A siphon system was implemented in 2002, which removes hypolimnetic water from near the lake bottom and discharges the water into a drainage channel (dry creek bed) that drains to the Baraboo River (Lathrop et al. 2005). The plan has been to run the siphon from late August until fall turnover to maximize the amount of phosphorous removed while minimizing the amount of water removed (Lathrop et al. 2005). At the time of the 2024 survey, phosphorous removal continued in this manner.

Significant observations of the aquatic plant community did not occur prior to a 1974 survey in an area along the southeast shore, where the plant community consisted of 7 species, and was dominated by *Potamogeton robbinsii* (Robbins pondweed) and *Elodea canadensis* (Common waterweed; Baker 1975). Additional surveys from 1979 to 1983 found several more species, and a 1984 survey found 16 species, dominated by Robbins pondweed, *Myriophyllum spicatum* (Eurasian watermilfoil) and common waterweed (Lillie and Mason 1986). Comparisons between the 1974 survey and those conducted in the 1980s suggested that Eurasian watermilfoil had expanded, elodea had declined, and Robbins pondweed remained unchanged (Lillie and Mason 1986, Lillie 1990). A WDNR survey conducted in 2007 indicated the presence of 13 species, and the three dominant species were Robbins pondweed, common waterweed and *Ceratophyllum demersum* (coontail). Eurasian watermilfoil had declined and was only found at one sampling spot out of 248 (WDNR unreported data).

Because of the geologic history of Devils Lake, the pre-settlement fish population likely originated from the Wisconsin River (Lillie and Mason 1986). The stocking of Devils Lake began as early as 1873, and salmonids (brook trout, lake trout, Atlantic salmon and probably rainbow trout) were the first species reported to be stocked (Lillie and Mason 1986). Brook trout may have been present in the lake prior to stocking, and rainbow trout were first reported present in 1895, though were probably stocked earlier (Lillie and Mason 1986). The first comprehensive fishery surveys were made in the early 1900s and were conducted by scientists from the University of Wisconsin (Lillie and Mason 1986). Several surveys have taken place since that time, primarily by the Wisconsin Conservation Department/Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. White suckers are thought to have been original residents of Devils Lake and have been captured during fish surveys throughout the years, while carp have been observed but never in great numbers (Lillie and Mason 1986). Many minnow and darter species have been documented, with mimic shiner, spotfin shiner and bluntnose minnow most abundant in a 1984 survey.

Four fish population surveys made using seines from 1954 to 1984 indicated a shift in the fish composition of Devils Lake from a cool water fish assemblage dominated by yellow perch, walleyes and smallmouth bass to one dominated by centrarchid panfish (primarily bluegills and pumpkinseeds) and largemouth bass (Lillie and Mason 1986). The shift began to occur between 1955 and 1967 when the percentage of the catch made up of bluegills and pumpkinseeds increased from 5.3% to 48.0% and the percentage made up of largemouth bass increased from 0% to 47.8% (Lillie and Mason 1986). By 1984, bluegills and pumpkinseeds made up an even larger percentage of the catch at 74.7%, while largemouth bass had declined to 16.3% (Lillie and Mason 1986). The 1984 survey indicated that 88% of the bluegills collected were between 3 and 6 inches, and these fish were of overlapping age groups; the bluegill growth rate may have slowed between 1954 and 1984 (Lillie and Mason 1986). For several decades, Devils Lake has supported a stocked trout fishery, and today the trout fishing season runs concurrently with the regular gamefish season (Table 1). Trout stockings primarily consisted of rainbow trout from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, and after 1953 yearling rainbow trout were the product of choice for stocking, typically at the rate of 30,000 to 50,000 per year (Larson 1994). Managers began substituting brown trout for rainbow trout in the mid-1960s to achieve a higher rate of holdover fish (Larson 1994). After 1974, trout stocking rates were reduced in favor of walleye stockings, and following a study of Devils Lake in 1986-87, rainbow trout stockings were discontinued in favor of brown trout due to suspected overgrazing of *Daphnia* by rainbow trout (WDNR 1988, Larson 1994). Since that time, stockings of yearling brown trout have occurred annually, but the number stocked each year has varied between approximately 3,000 and 23,000, often based on hatchery production levels. Through 2024, DNR stocking quota guidelines allowed for 16,000 yearling brown trout to be stocked into Devils Lake, and information on stocking that occurred since the last comprehensive fishery survey in 2013 is found in Table 2.

Rainbow trout were stocked on a one-time basis in 2020 when yearling rainbow trout stocking coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. That spring, yearling rainbow trout stockings that were scheduled for streams and urban ponds were diverted to two-story lakes that could accommodate large numbers of trout. This was done to maximize the number of trout stocked at each location, thus reducing the number of stocking locations and limiting the amount of hauling trips. This reduced the number of stops for hatchery truck drivers which helped to limit potential exposure to the Coronavirus.

Stocked brown trout in Devils Lake have shown the ability to hold over and live for multiple years in the lake, providing a put-grow-and take fishery as opposed to a mere put-and-take opportunity. A 1993 study found that the yearling fish stocked in April at an average length of 8.2 inches had reached 9-10 inches by June (Larson 1994). Of the 57 brown trout that were examined, 10 were determined to be holdovers (18%) and these fish averaged 16.4 inches in June (Larson 1994). By winter, anglers were catching trout in two distinct groups that measured 12 to 14 inches and 18 to 22 inches, and these groups would have corresponded to fish stocked as yearlings the previous spring, and holdover fish stocked in previous years (Larson 1994). A fall gill net survey was conducted in October 2011 for the purpose of collecting various fish species for contaminant analysis. This survey captured 6 brown trout and ages were determined for 5 of these fish. Three fish were aged at 1+, and they averaged 13.4 inches, while 2 fish were aged at 2+ and they averaged 15.5 inches. Based on this small sample of aged fish, 40% of the brown trout were holdover fish. Local trout angler Ken Alvar was kind enough to share the lengths of the brown trout that he harvested from May through August 2013. Using the length at age data from the 2011 survey and the average length of fish stocked in April 2013 (9.2 inches), ages were estimated for Ken's sample, and 10 out of 25 of these fish were determined to be holdover fish (age 2+, 40%).

Stocking of walleyes into Devils Lake became standard practice in 1974, and after that stockings almost exclusively consisted of small fingerling fish (≤ 3 inches; Larson 1994, Table 2). One notable exception was 2009 when Gollon Bait and Fish Farm in Dodgeville donated surplus large fingerling (LGF) walleyes to the DNR and all Sauk County walleye lakes were stocked with 10 LGF walleyes/acre. The 2013 survey indicated the walleye population was primarily composed of fish from that 2009 year class. Little survival of fish from years where small fingerlings were stocked was evident, and walleye stocking was discontinued after 2013 based on a lack of recruitment of stocked small fingerlings to the adult fishery.

Northern pike have only been stocked once since 1972; 2,500 small fingerlings (average length 1.9 inches) were stocked in 2005. Otherwise, the northern pike population has been sustained through natural reproduction. Northern pike grow quickly in Devils Lake and have good potential to reach 40 inches. A 32-inch minimum length limit and a daily bag limit of one fish have helped to preserve excellent northern pike size structure since the regulation went into effect in 1995.

High largemouth bass abundance combined with poor growth and population size structure led to a fishing regulation change for largemouth and smallmouth bass in Devils Lake in 2018. The statewide standard regulation of a 14-inch minimum length limit and a 5-fish daily bag limit was changed to no minimum length limit with a protected slot from 14-18 inches and a daily bag limit of 5 fish including one fish per day over 18 inches. This was done to provide anglers with a harvest opportunity for smaller bass with the goal of reducing abundance and improving growth and population size structure.

An angler creel survey was conducted at Devils Lake from July 1, 2023-October 31, 2023, January 1, 2024-February 28, 2024, and May 1-June 30, 2024. The survey was conducted to estimate angler effort, catch and harvest of gamefish species in the lake and to obtain additional angler preference data for bass and trout (Nye 2025).

SURVEY EFFORT

Following ice-out, five fyke nets were set on March 4, 2024. Another net was added on March 5 bringing the total to six nets. Nets were moved to new locations as necessary until all nets were removed on March 14 due to low catches and limited evidence of pike spawning. Four nets were set again on March 26, and ran through April 12 when they were removed for the final time. Nets were a mixture of 3-foot and 4-foot rectangular frame nets with circular hoops, and they targeted northern pike (SN1). Total SN1 effort was 88 net nights.

Nets were set again on June 3 to sample more panfish (SN3). Each net set consisted of two fyke nets with the net openings facing each other, connected in the center by a 75-foot lead. Nets were set offshore on vegetated flats, with two sets running parallel to shore and a third running diagonal to shore. From end to end, each set consisted of a fyke net anchor tied to the cod-end of the net, then the net itself, then the 75-foot lead, then the second net, anchor line and fyke net anchor. Each set had an A-side and a B-side and each net within a set was considered a unique net, with six total nets deployed each day (three sets of two nets each). Total SN3 effort was 18 net nights. Fyke net descriptions and locations (GPS coordinates) from SN1 and SN3 can be found in Table 3.

Gamefish, as defined in sec 29.001(41), Wis. Stats. includes all varieties of fish except rough fish and minnows. Panfish are therefore gamefish, and in ch. NR 20.03(29) Wis. Adm. Code, panfish includes yellow perch, bluegill, black crappie, white crappie,

pumpkinseed, green sunfish, warmouth and orangespotted sunfish. For the purposes of this report, sport fish refers to a subset of gamefish including walleye, northern pike, muskellunge, largemouth bass, smallmouth bass and channel catfish.

Gamefish were measured to the nearest 0.1 inch and a subsample of each species was weighed to the nearest 0.01 pound. Otoliths were taken from a subsample of bluegills, black crappies, yellow perch and largemouth bass and fin rays were taken from northern pike and smallmouth bass for aging. The goal was to take structures from five fish per half-inch group for bluegills, black crappies, largemouth bass and smallmouth bass. Five structures per half-inch group from each sex were removed from northern pike and yellow perch. Sex was recorded when evident for northern pike and yellow perch. Sexually mature northern pike were marked with a top caudal fin clip, and immature fish were marked with a bottom caudal fin clip. Largemouth and smallmouth bass ≥ 8 inches were marked with a top caudal fin clip, and bass ≤ 8 inches were marked with a bottom caudal fin clip. Fin clips were given for the purpose of calculating mark-recapture PEs for the species listed.

A DNR standard direct current (DC) boom shocker boat was used to complete the late-spring electrofishing survey (SE2) occurred on the night of May 23. The SE2 survey assessed the relative abundance of bass and panfish. The entire shoreline was sampled, and all species were collected, except common carp were counted and not dipped. Calcified structures were removed, and fish were weighed as needed to fill out length bins for age and growth analysis. Bass were examined for the presence of fin clips for PE calculations, however the number of fish marked was low, and the number of recaptures was too few for calculation of a valid PE.

Methods

A multiple census mark-recapture population estimate for northern pike was calculated using the Schnabel method. The formula for the Schnabel method is noted here:

$$N = \frac{\Sigma(C_t M_t)}{R+1}$$

Where N is the population size, C_t is the number captured on day t, M_t is the number marked on day t and R is the total number of recaptures from the survey (Ricker 1975).

Various data analyses were completed using both Microsoft Excel and R (version 4.2.3) combined with R Studio (2023.03.0+386, “Cherry Blossom”). For all sampling periods, total catch and catch-per-unit of effort (CPUE) was calculated by gear type for all species. Length frequency distributions were generated for gamefish species of interest. Length range, mean and median lengths were calculated for gamefish species as well. The proportional size distribution (PSD), proportional size distribution of fish sizes often acceptable for harvest (PSD-H, either socially acceptable or legally acceptable under current fishing regulations) and proportional size distribution of preferred length fish (PSD-P) were calculated for all gamefish

species of interest with more than 100 stock size individuals collected (Anderson and Neumann 1996, Guy et al. 2007). Length designations for stock, quality, harvestable, preferred, memorable and trophy sizes of the gamefish species collected from Devils Lake can be found in Table 4; these values were used for calculation of PSD (Anderson and Neumann 1996, Guy et al. 2007). For bluegills, PSD calculations were reported separately for fyke netting and electrofishing due to possible bias, with fyke nets being selective for larger bluegills (Laarman and Ryckman 1982).

Ages were estimated from calcified structures for a subsample of each species, and age and size data of these fish were used to generate age-length keys and ages were assigned to all fish sampled to estimate the age frequency of the population based on the aged subsample (Isermann and Knight 2005). Age frequency distributions were then generated for each species and inferences were made about year class strength and annual mortality when possible. Catch curves were generated for species exhibiting consistent recruitment for calculation of total annual mortality rates. The mean length-at-age was used to make inferences about fish growth in Devils Lake by comparing the lake to area, regional and statewide averages and lake class median values. Area averages are calculated from mean length-at-age values from lakes managed out of the Poynette fisheries office and surveyed from 2013-2024. Area comparisons are helpful for local anglers who are interested in knowing which of the lakes in their area offers the greatest fishing potential for a certain species. Statewide comparisons help to give anglers a better idea how a given lake compares on a broader scale. Lake class comparisons help anglers understand how a given lake shapes up against other lakes in the state that are the most like that lake.

Devils Lake is classified as complex-two-story under a recently developed classification system for Wisconsin Lakes. The complex-two-story class includes 146 lakes across Wisconsin (Rypel et al. 2019). Lakes in this classification account for 2% of classified lakes by number and around 14% of the total surface area of classified lakes. Complex-two-story lakes have four or more sportfish species present, large lake area, deep, cold and oxygenated hypolimnetic habitats that support coldwater fishes, are managed differently for phosphorous water quality standards, are low in the landscape and may develop quality walleye size structure (Rypel et al. 2019).

The mean length-at-age was calculated using methods outlined in Bettoli and Miranda (2001), with the formula listed here:

$$\overline{Li} = (\sum N_{ij}\bar{l}_{ij})/N_i$$

where $\overline{L}_i$ represents the mean length of the *i*th age group, $N_{ij} = N_j(\frac{n_{ij}}{n_j})$, N_j is the number of fish in the *j*th length group, n_{ij} = number of fish of the *i*th age group subsampled in the *j*th length group, n_j is the number of fish subsampled in the *j*th length group and $N_i = \sum N_{ij}$ over all *j* length groups. The inputs to this equation are derived from the length frequency distribution of the sample and the age-length key.

Relative weights were calculated to evaluate body condition of fish. Relative weight (W_r) is a tool that compares the length of the fish to an expected weight for that length. Standard weights were calculated for individuals of each species that had weights recorded and standard weights were only calculated for individuals larger than the minimum recommended length for each species. (Murphy et al. 1991, Anderson and Neumann 1996). Relative weights for each fish were calculated by dividing a fish's actual weight by the standard weight for a fish of that length. Average relative weight was then calculated for each species, and for each sex separately when sex data were available. Relative weight values between 75 and 100 indicate normal weight for a given length. A relative weight value greater than 100 indicates that a fish is in excellent condition. A relative weight value less than 75 indicates that a fish is in poor condition.

Results

GENERAL FISH COMMUNITY

In total, 1,491 fish representing 17 species from eight families were collected during spring netting and electrofishing at Devils Lake in 2024. Catch and catch rate (CPUE) by gear type are shown for each species collected in Table 5. Length, age and relative weight data are summarized in Table 6.

BLUEGILL

In total, 358 bluegills were collected during the survey; the catch rates were 0.6 fish/net-night during SN1, 22.2 fish/mile of shoreline during SE2 and 12.4 fish/net night during SN3. In terms of the total number of fish caught during spring netting and electrofishing, bluegill was the second most abundant species collected after rock bass. The 2024 SE2 catch rate was nearly double the 2013 value (12.0 fish/mile) but was low compared to other nearby lakes, ranking 23rd out of 25 lakes in the Poynette management area surveyed since 2013 (Table 7). When compared to other lakes in its class across Wisconsin (complex-two-story; 146 total lakes), the SE2 catch rate placed Devils Lake just above the 25th percentile; bluegill abundance in Devils Lake is low relative to the rest of the lake class (Figure 1). When looking at size-specific electrofishing catch rates of larger bluegills, Devils Lake was more competitive placing 17th for CPUE-6 (16.7 fish/mile), ninth for CPUE-7 (15.0 fish/mile), and second for CPUE-8 (10 fish/mile). Despite low abundance, bluegill size structure in Devils Lake was good.

Lengths of 385 measured bluegills ranged from 2.5 to 10.4 inches, with mean and median values of 6.4 and 6.3 inches, respectively. The length frequency distribution for bluegills is presented in Figure 2. Fewer than 100 bluegills were collected in total during SN1 and SE2, so stock density indices were calculated based on the total bluegill catch from all periods including SN3. The PSD, PSD-7 and PSD-P, PSD-9, and PSD-10 values were 53, 44, 36, 12 and 1, respectively. Size-specific catch rates and PSD

values both indicate size structure is very good in Devils Lake compared to other area lakes.

Ages ranged from 2 to 11 years and bluegills were fully recruited to the sampling gear by age 3, which is typical. Bluegills in Devils Lake have the longevity to exceed 10 years of age and 10 inches in length, a distinction held by very few other area lakes. Recruitment appeared to be relatively consistent with a steady decline in numbers at age after age 3 (Figure 3). The lone exception was an exceptionally high numbers of age 8 fish relative to ages 7 and 9 indicating a stronger than normal year class produced in 2016. While there was some slight variability in bluegill recruitment, catch curve analysis estimated total annual mortality after age-3 at 51.2% using the Chapman-Robson method (Figure 4). This estimate was relatively low compared to other area lakes.

Bluegill mean length-at-age values in Devils Lake were well above area and state averages and lake class median values for ages 4 and older (Figure 5). Bluegills in Devils Lake averaged over 8 inches at age 5, which represents the highest mean length at age 5 of any area lake. Comparisons of mean length-at-age of bluegills between the 2024 and 2013 surveys were not possible because so few bluegills were sampled in 2013, and because otoliths were used to age bluegills in 2024, and scales were used in 2013. Otoliths yield far more accurate and precise estimates of age for bluegills than scales do, and comparisons of mean length-at-age data from two different years using those two different structures have limited value.

Overall, bluegills larger than 3 inches were in good condition; relative weights of 117 weighed bluegills averaged 100.9. Fifty-six bluegills (47.9%) had relative weight values >100, indicating excellent condition, while five (4.3%) had a relative weight value <75, indicating poor condition.

YELLOW PERCH

In total, 117 yellow perch were collected; the catch rates were 0.6 fish/net night during SN1, 3.3 fish/mile during SE2 and 1.7 fish/net night during SN3. The SN1 catch rate was greatly reduced from the last survey in 2013 (1.5 fish/net night) and just below the 25th percentile for the complex-two-story lake class (Figure 6). Lengths of 116 yellow perch ranged from 5.5 to 13.3 inches and mean and median lengths were 9.7 and 10.2 inches, respectively. These were the largest mean, median and maximum sizes of perch observed in any lake in the Poynette management area in the last 10 years. The PSD, PSD-9, PSD-P and PSD-M values were 75, 71, 53 and 12, respectively; these values were also the highest of any area lake. By all metrics, Devils Lake has the best yellow perch size structure of any lake in the Poynette management area (Table 8). The yellow perch length frequency distribution from 2024 survey is presented in Figure 7.

Ages ranged from 2 to 9 years with age-4 fish being the most common in the distribution (Figure 8). The age frequency distribution didn't indicate any years of

failed recruitment, but alternating years of stronger and weaker recruitment were evident. Ages 2, 4, 6 and 8 (2016, 2018, 2020, and 2022) were stronger year classes relative to ages 3, 5, 7 and 9 (2015, 2017, 2019, and 2021). These alternating weak and strong year classes violated the assumption of constant recruitment. Application of a catch curve to the perch data was not possible, and no inference on annual mortality could be made. Yellow perch grow very fast in Devils Lake. Mean length-at-age values were well above area and state averages and lake class medians for ages 2 and older. Perch reached 10 inches as early as age 3 and averaged over 10 inches by age 4 (Figure 9).

Overall, yellow perch in Devils Lake were in good condition; relative weight values of 105 weighed yellow perch averaged 93.5. Four fish (3.8%) had a relative weight value ≤ 75 indicating poor body condition, and 27 fish (23.1%) had relative weight values ≥ 100 indicating excellent body condition.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

In total, 237 largemouth bass were collected including recaptures; catch rates were 0.3 fish/net night during SN1 and 55.8 fish/mile during SE2. The SE2 catch and catch rate in 2024 exactly matched the 2013 survey (201 fish, 55.8 fish/mile). The 2024 SE2 catch rate was above the 95th percentile (48.5 fish/mile) for the complex-two-story lake class (Figure 10); largemouth bass abundance in Devils Lake was much higher than most lakes in the class. While CPUE-8 values were nearly the same in 2024 compared to 2013, CPUE-10 and CPUE-12 values were both markedly lower in 2024 (Figure 11). By contrast, CPUE-14 and CPUE-15 were markedly improved in 2024 compared to 2013, and CPUE-18 was also higher in 2024. Locally, Devils Lake was in the upper third of lakes for bass abundance, ranking 7th for total catch rate out of 24 lakes surveyed in the Poynette management area since 2013. However, Devils Lake was in the middle of the pack or below when comparing catch rates of larger bass, ranking 16th out of 24 lakes for CPUE-14 (3.9 fish/mile) and 9th out of 24 lakes for CPUE-18 (0.6 fish/mile). Full rankings for local lakes based on size-specific largemouth bass electrofishing catch rates can be found in Table 9.

Lengths of 237 unique largemouth bass ranged from 4.9 to 19.4 inches, and the mean and median lengths were both 11.2 inches. The length frequency distribution is presented in Figure 12. Of the largemouth bass ≥ 8 inches in length (stock size), fish ≥ 12 inches were present in good proportion (PSD = 39), while fish ≥ 14 inches were less common (PSD-14 = 14) and fish ≥ 18 inches were rare (PSD-18 = 1). The PSD value was lower in 2024 than in 2013 (PSD = 67). However, proportions of larger bass were improved in 2024 compared to 2013 when PSD-14 and PSD-18 values were 1 and 0, respectively.

Overall, the observed age range of largemouth bass was 2 to 19 years, with age 6 being the most common (Figure 13). Ages 7, 10, 11 and 16-18 were absent from the distribution and strength of age classes that were present was highly variable. This violated the assumption of constant recruitment and prevented fitting a catch curve to the data, limiting inferences on annual mortality. Largemouth bass mean length-

at-age in Devils Lake in 2024 was consistent with state and local averages and lake class median values for ages 2 and 3, but fell well behind area, state and lake class standards for ages 4-19, with the disparity increasing with age (Figure 14). This was also the case in 2013. A few largemouth bass reached 14 inches in Devils Lake by age 6, and mean length-at-age only exceeded 14 inches for ages age 9, 12, 14, 15 and 19. The mean length at age 6 was 11.9 inches, which was slightly better than the value from the previous survey in 2013 (10.8 inches) but was by far the worst in the area (Table 10). It should be noted that otoliths were used to age bass in 2024 compared to dorsal spines in 2013. Otoliths typically yield more accurate and precise age estimates for bass than dorsal spines.

The body condition of largemouth bass in Devils Lake was good; relative weights of 96 weighed fish averaged 93.6. This was an improvement from 2013 when largemouth bass relative weights averaged 83. Six fish (6.3%) had a relative weight below 75, indicating poor body condition. This was a marked improvement from 2013 when 18% of largemouth bass had relative weights below 75. Twenty-seven fish (28.1%) had relative weights greater than 100 in 2024 indicating excellent body condition. Conversely only one largemouth bass (1.3%) had a relative weight greater than 100 in 2013.

NORTHERN PIKE

In total, 121 northern pike were collected including recaptures during the spring of 2024; catch rates were 0.9 fish/net night during SN1, 0.3 fish/mile during SE2 and 0.1 fish/net night during SN3. The SN1 catch rate in 2024 was well below the SN1 catch rate in 2013 (2.4 fish/net-night). On a lake class level, the SN1 catch rate placed Devils Lake slightly below the median catch rate of 1.1 fish/net night for complex-two-story lakes (Figure 15). The Schnabel population estimate was 319 sexually mature northern pike (95% CI 203 – 492; CV = 22.9%), or 0.8 adult fish/acre (95% CI 0.5 – 1.3 fish/acre). This was higher than 2013 when the population estimate was 0.5 adult fish/acre (95% CI 0.4 – 0.7 fish/acre; CV = 13.6%) .

Lengths of 103 unique northern pike ranged from 12.7 to 43.7 inches, and the mean and median lengths were 30.1 and 31.5 inches, respectively. The length frequency distribution for all pike is presented in Figure 16. The PSD, PSD-P, PSD-32, PSD-M and PSD-40 values were 80, 63, 50, 43 and 14, respectively in 2024. Most 2024 PSD values were similar to 2013 when PSD, PSD-P, PSD-32 and PSD-M values were 87, 65, 49 and 41, respectively. However, PSD-40 was much higher in 2024 compared to 2013 (PSD-40 = 1). Devils Lake has the best northern pike size structure in the Poynette management area based on PSD-P, PSD-32, PSD-M, PSD-40, average length and maximum length. Female northern pike (n = 50) ranged from 16.6 to 43.7 inches, with mean and median lengths of 35.3 and 37.1 inches, respectively. Male northern pike (n = 51) ranged from 12.7 to 37.5 inches with mean and median lengths of 25.3 and 25.6 inches, respectively.

Ages ranged from 2 to 11 years with no age 10 fish present (Figure 17). Age 7 was the most common in the distribution (25.2%). Recruitment generally followed a pattern of

alternating years of stronger (even years) and weaker (odd years) recruitment for ages 2-8, except age 7 which was the strongest year class present. Recruitment variability prevented application of a catch curve to the pike data, and no inference on annual mortality could be made.

Northern pike mean length-at-age in Devils Lake outpaced area and state averages and lake class median values for ages 4 and older (Figure 18). When examined separately, female pike mean length at age exceeded area averages by age 4, and males by age 6. The lone exception was the single age-5 female sampled, which was slightly shorter than the age-5 area average. Some female pike exceeded 32 inches by age 4 and averaged over 32 inches by age 6. The fastest growing females exceeded 40 inches by age 6 (Figure 19). Male northern pike larger than 32 inches were not uncommon, and mean length at age of males surpassed area averages by age 6 (Figure 20).

The body condition of northern pike in Devils Lake in 2024 was excellent; relative weights of 101 fish averaged 114.2. Three fish (3.0%) had a relative weights below 75 (poor body condition), and 66 (65.3%) had relative weights greater than 100 (excellent body condition). Females were in slightly better condition, with relative weights averaging 126.8 compared to 101.7 for males.

OTHER SPECIES OF INTEREST

Other species of interest to anglers that were collected during the survey included rock bass, pumpkinseed, burbot, brown trout, smallmouth bass, black crappie, walleye and rainbow trout. In total, 423 rock bass were collected, making it the most abundant species in the survey. The catch rates were 1.5 fish/net night during SN1, 3.6 fish/mile during SE2 and 11.8 fish/net night during SN3. Lengths of 311 measured rock bass ranged from 3.7 to 10.0 inches, averaging 7.3 inches. Size structure was good with PSD and PSD-P values of 62 and 12, respectively. The length frequency distribution for rock bass is presented in Figure 21. Thirty-nine percent of the rock bass catch measured 8 inches or larger.

In total, 48 pumpkinseeds were collected, and the catch rates were 0.1 fish/net night during SN1, 1.1 fish/mile during SE2 and 2.1 fish/net night during SN3. Lengths ranged from 4.2 to 8.4 inches, averaging 6.9 inches. In total, 34 burbot were collected (all during SN1), and the catch rate was 0.3 fish/net night. Lengths of 32 measured fish ranged from 17.4 to 22.6 inches, averaging 19.9 inches.

In total, 32 brown trout were collected, and the catch rates were 0.2 fish/net night during SN1 and 2.8 fish/mile during SE2. Lengths of 31 measured fish ranged from 7.4 to 17.4 inches, averaging 10.3 inches. Six brown trout collected during SN1 had adipose fin clips, indicating they were recently stocked surplus broodstock fish from Nevin State Fish Hatchery.

In total, 24 smallmouth bass were collected, and the catch rates were less than 0.1 fish/net night during SN1, 6.1 fish/mile during SE2 and 0.1 fish/net night during SN3. The 2024 SE2 catch rate was lower than in 2013 (12.2 fish/mile) but still placed well

above the median for the lake class (Figure 22) and was third highest among area lakes for total smallmouth bass catch rate (Table 12). Lengths ranged from 6.2 to 13.8 inches, averaging 9.9 inches. Ages 2-8 were present in the sample with age 5 (n = 8) and age 3 (n = 6) being the most common (Figure _). Smallmouth bass grow slowly in Devils Lake where mean length-at-age values were below area and state averages and lake class medians for ages 4-8, and the disparity increases with age (Figure 23).

In total, 11 black crappies were collected, and the catch rates were 0.1 fish/net night during SN1, 0.3 fish/mile during SE2, and 0.2 fish/net night during SN3. Lengths ranged from 6.2 to 14.5 inches, averaging 10.3 inches. Ages 2 (n = 3), 4 (n = 3), 5 (n = 3), 6 (n = 1) and 8 (n = 1) were present. Mean length-at-age values for black crappie were slightly above area and state averages and lake class medians for all observed ages (Figure 24). Walleyes have not been stocked in Devils Lake since 2013, and in 2024 only three were collected. All were females, and individual lengths were 27.8 inches, 29.8 inches and 30.2 inches, respectively. A single rainbow trout was collected during SN1, and it was a holdover from the 2020 stocking that measured 18.9 inches. No detrimental species, including common carp, were collected during the 2024 survey.

Discussion

In general, panfish in Devils Lake provide a high-quality fishing opportunity for anglers based on size structure within the populations. Black crappie abundance was very low in 2024, consistent with past surveys. Bluegill abundance was low in 2024 relative to the rest of the complex-two-story lake class and other area lakes. However, bluegill size structure was excellent compared to other lakes in the Poynette management area with some fish exceeding 10 inches in length. Bluegill growth was excellent in area, statewide and lake class comparisons.

Because of the excellent population size structure, bluegill is a highly sought-after species in Devils Lake. During the 2023-24 creel survey, bluegill received the second most directed angling effort (9,300 hours) after brown trout and had the highest total estimated catch (16,100 fish) and second highest estimated harvest (5,410 fish) after brown trout (Nye 2025). Bluegills had the highest specific catch rate (0.6 hours/fish) and the highest specific harvest rate (1.7 hours/fish) of any species in the survey. A total of 528 bluegills measured by creel clerks averaged 8.0 inches in length, with fish as large as 10.7 inches harvested. Large bluegills were harvested (creel survey) in markedly greater proportions than their representation in the actual population (fishery survey). The PSD, PSD-P and PSD-10 values from the angler harvest were 99, 57 and 2 compared to 53, 36 and 1 in the 2024 fishery survey. Bluegill growth was excellent, and recruitment was steady from year to year, but abundance was low. While the total annual mortality rate was not alarmingly high, there was a sharp drop in number at age after age 5 when bluegills averaged 8.5 inches. This is likely indicative of anglers' preference for harvesting larger bluegills. It is conceivable that harvest pressure could suppress size structure in the future (growth overfishing) in this popular fishery. Clear water makes fishing bluegill on their spawning beds an easy proposition in May and June, even in deeper water. Advancements in fishing

electronics are also making it easier for anglers to target and catch bluegills during non-spawning periods when they may be suspended over deep water. The management goal as defined in the 2013 comprehensive survey report was to maintain a balanced bluegill population with good size structure and that is still the goal in 2024. The objectives in 2013 were a total bluegill CPUE ≥ 100 per mile during SE2, with a PSD-P ≥ 10. Currently the size structure objective is being met based on 2024 PSD values from all gear types, but the CPUE objective is not. The morphometry of Devils Lake (steep drop-offs, limited littoral area), coupled with the low conductivity in most of the lake presents a problem when trying to sample bluegills effectively using electrofishing. Electrofishing is unlikely to produce consistent high catches of bluegills in Devils Lake, certainly not 100 fish/mile. The bluegill CPUE objective should be altered to reflect expectations based on sampling conditions in Devils Lake and lake class standards for the complex two-story lake class. The new electrofishing CPUE objective should be a total bluegill catch rate between 16 and 52 fish/mile during SE2. These values represent the 25th percentile and the median for the lake class. In 2024, Devils Lake met this objective.

Spring electrofishing data (SE2) may not produce sufficient bluegill catches to fulfill data needs, even when combined with early spring fyke netting data (SN1). Late spring fyke netting (called SN3 in this survey, first week of June) with double fyke nets set in tandem on deeper offshore weed beds should occur in all future comprehensive surveys as this method proved effective at sampling multiple species of panfish and was the most effective sampling period and gear type for catching bluegills in the 2024 fishery survey.

Yellow perch abundance in Devils Lake is relatively low for the lake class and was markedly lower in 2024 compared to 2013 based on the SN1 catch rate. However, yellow perch growth is excellent, far exceeding growth in other Poynette area lakes, as well as within the complex-two-story lake class and all lakes statewide. Population size structure is the best in the area by all metrics. Based on creel data, harvested yellow perch averaged nearly 10.5 inches with fish up to 15 inches taken by anglers (Nye 2025). In 2023-24, yellow perch was the third most harvested species after brown trout and bluegill in Devils Lake. Yellow perch larger than 10 inches made up a higher percentage of angler harvest (65.3%) than the actual population during the 2024 comprehensive survey (52.6%). Despite excellent yellow perch growth, low population abundance along with fluctuating recruitment and high angler harvest relative to other species may limit the ability of the population to maintain its excellent size structure, reducing the quality of the fishery for anglers. The management goal outlined in the 2013 comprehensive survey report was to maintain a yellow perch fishery with good size structure, and this goal is unchanged in 2024. The stated objective in 2013 was to maintain PSD-P ≥ 30 and RSD-M ≥ 10. These objectives were met in 2024. However, the 2013 report pointed out that the possibility of overfishing exists for this population, and that a reduced bag limit may needed to be considered if future surveys indicate a decline in abundance and size structure of yellow perch.

While size structure has not declined, abundance of yellow perch in Devils Lake has declined.

Anglers spend the most time fishing for trout at Devils Lake and they harvest more brown trout than any other species. However, panfish are a close second in popularity among anglers looking to harvest fish at Devils Lake thanks to the excellent size structure of the bluegill and yellow perch populations. Anglers clearly harvest large bluegill and yellow perch in far greater proportion than their actual representation in their respective populations. Abundance of both species is low, recruitment of yellow perch is highly variable, and yellow perch abundance appears to be in decline. The potential for both species to be negatively impacted by harvest is such that a regulation change is recommended. Specifically, the daily bag limit for panfish at Devils Lake should be reduced from 25 to 10.

Largemouth bass abundance was high for the lake class and was the same in 2024 as it was in 2013 based on the SE2 catch rate. Largemouth bass growth was the worst of any lake in the area, and this was also unchanged from 2013. The 2023-24 creel survey found that anglers spent 6,772 hours targeting largemouth bass which was third-most of any species after brown trout and bluegill. The total estimated largemouth bass catch was 2,865 fish which was fourth-most after brown trout, bluegill and rock bass. However, despite no minimum length limit and a catch of nearly 3,000 fish, only an estimated 261 largemouth bass were harvested. Less than one quarter (23.2%) of anglers who answered the bass-specific creel survey questions said that they would harvest a bass smaller than 14 inches at Devils Lake with most indicating they don't harvest bass, regardless of the regulation. Of those who said they would harvest a bass, a total of 90.4% indicated a preference for fish between 10 and 14 inches. While removing the minimum length limit at Devils Lake in 2018 didn't perceptibly alter abundance or growth of largemouth bass by 2024, the protected slot has affected changes in population size structure. Some values such as PSD, CPUE-10 and CPUE-12 declined which is consistent with anglers' preference to harvest bass between 10 and 14 inches. Some values such as PSD-14, PSD-P, PSD-18, CPUE-14 and CPUE-18 showed marked improvements, consistent with the protected slot and the protection from harvest it offers fish that reach 14 inches. So, while abundance is high and growth is still poor, shifts in size structure are occurring within the population which is producing a better-quality bass fishery for anglers. The regulation appears to be working and should remain in effect. Because understanding age and growth of largemouth bass in Devils Lake is so critical to management of the population, and because otoliths yield far greater accuracy and precision of age estimates in largemouth bass, otoliths should remain the aging structure of choice in future surveys; dorsal spines or scales should not be used.

The management goal for largemouth bass in Devils Lake as stated in the 2013 comprehensive survey report was to reduce largemouth bass abundance and improve population size structure. The stated objective was a CPUE-8 between 20 and 30 fish/mile with a CPUE-14 ≥ 5 fish/mile. Since that time, Wisconsin developed a lakes classification system and associated CPUE standards, and a creel survey

informed managers of angler preferences for bass harvest in Devils Lake. Moving forward, the management goal should remain the same but measurable objectives should be altered to reflect realistic expectations for the lake class and for the ability of angler harvest to reduce largemouth bass abundance in Devils Lake. The new objectives are a total largemouth bass catch rate less than 48.5 fish/mile (95th percentile for the lake class), and CPUE-14 ≥ 5 fish/mile which is slightly above the median value for lakes in the Poynette management area. Currently, neither objective is being met. Over time, however, anglers may become more accustomed to harvesting smaller bass at Devils Lake, leading to the desired reduction in abundance. Notable progress toward the CPUE-14 objective has been achieved since 2013 and the continued protection offered by the protected slot should push CPUE-14 above 5 fish/mile by the time of the next comprehensive survey in 2034.

The northern pike SN1 catch rate was somewhat lower in 2024 compared to 2013 but was still near the median for the complex-two-story lake class. The lower catch rate in 2024 could be a result of the very early ice-off at the end of February followed by a very slow warming of the water temperature and a long, drawn-out northern pike spawn, requiring extensive survey effort (more net nights) to effectively sample the population. By contrast, in 2013 ice-out didn't start until April 16 but when it came, northern pike were concentrated in shallow areas to spawn, the water warmed quickly and the spawn peaked and ended within a few days. Sampling was much more effective and compressed into a much smaller time window (far fewer net nights), with higher catch rates. Despite the environmental challenges and lower catch rates, the mark-recapture population estimate was higher in 2024 than in 2013, indicating a stable to slightly increasing population. Recruitment was variable but no year class failures were evident. The fish grow fast and receive adequate protection from the fishing regulation to preserve the population and provide a quality experience for anglers. The creel survey found that northern pike received the 8th most directed effort (1,115 hours), estimated total catch was relatively low (180 fish) and no fish were harvested during the creel. Devils Lake produces proportionately more northern pike over 40 inches than any other lake in south central and southwestern Wisconsin based on PSD-40 values from the 2024 comprehensive survey. The management goal for northern pike outlined in the 2013 comprehensive survey report was to provide a trophy fishery for anglers and that management objective holds true in 2024. The objectives in 2013 were to maintain an adult population of ≥ 1.0 adult fish per acre and an RSD-M (34 inches) value of 30 or greater. As of 2024, the size structure objective was being met (RSD-M = 43), and abundance was closer to the goal than in 2013. No regulation change is needed for northern pike in Devils Lake.

Smallmouth bass were not caught in great numbers in 2024, but abundance was still high for the lake class based on SE2 catch rates. Recruitment was variable and growth and size structure were lackluster. During the 2023-24 creel survey anglers spent the 4th most directed effort fishing for smallmouth bass (4,498 hours), caught an estimated 544 fish and harvested an estimated 17 fish. Abundance was lower in 2024

comprehensive survey than in 2013 based on the SE2 electrofishing catch rate, and no fish ≥ 14 inches were collected. That was one fewer fish ≥ 14 inches than in the 2013 survey. The current fishing regulation doesn't appear to be affecting growth or population size structure, and the creel survey informed managers that angers are harvesting few fish despite there being no minimum length limit. Because smallmouth bass are such a minor component of the fishery, there are no population-specific goals moving forward, and smallmouth bass should continue to be managed under the same regulation as largemouth bass.

Rock bass were the most abundant fish collected in the survey and had good size structure. Devils Lake is the only area lake where rock bass make up a significant component of the fish community. During the 2023-24 creel survey, rock bass had the 6th most directed effort (1,551 hours) and the 3rd highest estimated catch (3,064 fish). Relatively few rock bass were harvested (an estimated 447 fish) compared to the number caught. There are no specific management goals or objectives for rock bass. Rock bass are not defined as panfish in ch. NR 20.03(29), Wis. Adm. Code, and are not subject to daily panfish bag limits.

As previously noted, Devils Lake is home to a very popular stocked brown trout fishery with around 16,000 yearling brown trout stocked annually (average length of yearlings at stocking in 2023 was 9.2 inches). The 2023-24 angler creel survey at Devils Lake found that over 60% of Devils Lake trout anglers purchased a trout stamp to fish for trout exclusively at Devils Lake, and nowhere else. Brown trout were the most targeted species during the creel survey, receiving 14,429 hours of directed angling effort (33.5% of all directed angling effort). Brown trout was the most popular species targeted by anglers during the winter, accounting for 85.8% of all directed angling effort during ice fishing. The total estimated brown trout catch for the survey was 9,950 fish (62.2% of the annual stocking quota) which was second after bluegill. Estimated brown trout harvest was 6,949 fish (43.4% of the annual stocking quota), which was more harvest than any other species. It should be noted that the winter of 2023-24 was exceptionally mild. Safe ice didn't form at Devils Lake until mid-January and ice-out was during the last week in February, for an ice season that lasted about 5 weeks. The lack of safe, fishable ice limited brown trout catch and harvest because nearly 90% of ice angling effort was directed at brown trout. If safe ice fishing conditions had persisted closer to the more typical 8-10 weeks, brown trout catch and harvest totals would have been markedly higher.

Standard DNR inland lake sampling protocols don't include methods specific to trout, and sampling the brown trout population was not a focus of the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey at Devils Lake. However, one population inference may be drawn from data from the creel survey. During the first month of the creel survey (July 2023), 84 harvested brown trout were measured by creel clerks. The length frequency distribution of those 84 fish showed two distinct groups of fish. A group of 9–12-inch fish with a peak at the 10-inch group, and a 12–14-inch group with a peak at the 13-inch group. The 9–12-inch group made up 67% of the sample and represented trout stocked in the spring of 2023. The 12–14-inch group made up 33% of the sample and

represented trout stocked in prior years . This means that in early summer, roughly one-third of the brown trout in Devils Lake are fish that were stocked the previous year and survived to their second summer in the lake (holdovers). By the end of October, some brown trout had reached 16 inches in length. In any case, the creel survey documented the popularity of the stocked trout fishery among anglers and quantified its use.

Use of the stocked trout fishery documented in the creel survey was sufficient to warrant continued trout stocking at Devils Lake. However, recent changes to DNR inland trout stocking guidance for lakes implemented a cap of 5,000 yearling trout per waterbody. Additionally, domestic brook trout and brown trout will no longer be available for stocking in Wisconsin after 2026. This means that stocking 16,000 yearling domestic brown trout each year in Devils Lake will no longer be possible. One way to offset the coming reduction in the number of yearling trout stocked is to increase the number of surplus broodstock trout stocked at Devils Lake, a practice which began in 2025. This included stocking 2,122 surplus adult feral brown trout (average length 13.6 inches) and 1,236 surplus adult feral brook trout (average length 12.2 inches) from Nevin State Fish Hatchery in March and April. Another alternative for future years is to stock up to 5,000 yearling feral brown trout raised at Nevin Fish Hatchery. These fish have been requested from the hatchery system for stocking in spring 2027. The final trout stocking alternative is to switch to stocking yearling domestic rainbow trout. However, this option is least preferred because past management decisions ended annual rainbow trout stockings over concerns that rainbow trout overgrazing of zooplankton was contributing to reduced water quality in Devils Lake. It is recommended to continue stocking all available surplus feral broodstock brook and brown trout in Devils Lake to support the fishery. Surplus adult broodstock quota requests for each species should be 2,500 per year. It is also recommended to stock 5,000 yearling feral brown trout in Devils Lake annually. These two options together could result in up to 10,000 catchable trout stocked in Devils Lake each year if stocking of each product reaches the full quota request. This is a little over half of the number of trout stocked in past years, but under current stocking guidance and hatchery capabilities it may be the best we can do.

Recommendations

1. Reduce the daily bag limit for panfish from 25 fish to 10 fish per day.
2. Retain the existing fishing regulations for all other species.
3. Future comprehensive fishery surveys should utilize late spring fyke netting (SN3) in deep water on offshore weed beds in addition to SN1 and SE2 to fulfill bluegill data needs.
4. Largemouth bass growth is an important variable for management of the species in Devils Lake and otoliths should be used to age largemouth bass in future comprehensive surveys of Devils Lake because of the high accuracy and precision of age estimates derived from otoliths.

5. Stock 5,000 yearling feral brown trout in Devils Lake annually to support the two-story trout fishery.
6. Stock surplus feral broodstock brown trout and brook trout up to 2,500 per species, per year to support the two-story trout fishery.

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Tables

Table 1. Current fishing regulations for Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

SPECIES	SEASON DATES	LENGTH AND BAG LIMITS
Catfish	Open All Year	No minimum length limit and the daily bag limit is 10.
Panfish (bluegill, pumpkinseed sunfish, crappie and yellow perch)	Open All Year	No minimum length limit and the daily bag limit is 25.
Largemouth bass and smallmouth bass	First Saturday in May through the first Sunday in March	Only fish less than 14” may be kept, except one fish may be over 18”. The total daily bag limit is 5.
Northern pike	First Saturday in May through the first Sunday in March	The minimum length limit is 32" and the daily bag limit is 1.
Walleye	First Saturday in May through the first Sunday in March	The minimum length limit is 15" and the daily bag limit is 3.
Trout	First Saturday in May through the first Sunday in March	The minimum length limit is 8" and the daily bag limit is 3.
Bullheads	Open All Year	No minimum length limit and the daily bag limit is unlimited.
Rough fish	Open All Year	No minimum length limit and the daily bag limit is unlimited.

Table 2. Stocking history for Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin 2014-2024.

YEAR	SPECIES	AGE CLASS	NUMBER STOCKED	AVERAGE LENGTH (INCHES)	SOURCE
2014	BROWN TROUT	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	729	16.1	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2014	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	10,909	9.1	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2015	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	19,078	9.0	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2016	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	8,877	9.0	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2017	BROWN TROUT	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	447	17.1	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2017	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	9,630	9.2	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2017	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	596	16.5	WILD ROSE SFH AND PONDS
2017	BROWN TROUT	LARGE FINGERLING	4,427	8.0	WILD ROSE SFH AND PONDS
2018	BROWN TROUT	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	394	9.1	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2018	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	9,520	9.1	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2019	BROWN TROUT	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	375	17.1	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2019	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	12,169	9.1	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2020	BROWN TROUT	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	152	17.1	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2020	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	16,183	8.9	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2020	RAINBOW TROUT	YEARLING	8,514	8.4	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2021	BROWN TROUT	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	192	17.1	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2021	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	15,581	9.1	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2022	BROWN TROUT	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	375	13.2	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2022	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	15,813	9.0	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2023	BROWN TROUT	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	410	17.1	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2023	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	16,110	9.2	ST CROIX FALLS SFH
2024	BROWN TROUT	ADULT (BROODSTOCK)	375	9.3	NEVIN SFH AND PONDS
2024	BROWN TROUT	YEARLING	16,965	9.0	ST CROIX FALLS SFH

Table 3. Dimensions, dates and locations (GPS coordinates) of fyke nets used during the 2024 SN1 survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

NET NUMBER[1]	LEAD LENGTH (FEET)	FRAME HEIGHT (FEET)	SET DATE	FINAL LIFT DATE	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
1	100	2	03/04/2024	03/14/2024	43.41441	-89.73825
2	50	3	03/04/2024	03/14/2024	43.41127	-89.73660
3	75	4	03/04/2024	03/14/2024	43.41586	-89.73740
4	75	4	03/04/2024	03/12/2024	43.41337	-89.72650
5	75	3	03/04/2024	03/14/2024	43.42504	-89.72707
6	75	4	03/05/2024	03/14/2024	43.42554	-89.73513
7	75	4	03/12/2024	03/14/2024	43.40840	-89.73190
1A	100	2	03/25/2024	04/12/2024	43.41441	-89.73825
2A	75	4	03/25/2024	04/12/2024	43.41127	-89.73660
6A	75	4	03/25/2024	04/12/2024	43.42554	-89.73513
7A	75	4	03/25/2024	04/12/2024	43.40840	-89.73190

1. Nets were removed due to cold water and low catches on March 14, and nets 1, 2, 6, and 7 were re-set on March 25 in the same locations and given the "A" designation.

Table 4. Dimensions, dates and locations (GPS coordinates) of fyke nets used during the 2024 SN3 survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

NET NUMBER[1]	LEAD LENGTH (FEET)	FRAME HEIGHT (FEET)	SET DATE	FINAL LIFT DATE	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
1A	75	4	06/03/2024	06/06/2024	43.41182	-89.73675
1B	75	4	06/03/2024	06/06/2024	43.41213	-89.73681
2A	75	4	06/03/2024	06/06/2024	43.40864	-89.73011
2B	75	4	06/03/2024	06/06/2024	43.40884	-89.73043
5A	75	3	06/03/2024	06/06/2024	43.42548	-89.73506
5B	75	3	06/03/2024	06/06/2024	43.42581	-89.73492

1. Nets were set in tandem, each with an "A" side and a "B" side separated by a 75-foot lead panel. Each net tandem was set in deeper water offshore.

Table 5. The PSD length categories (inches) for selected fish species that were collected from Devils Lake in 2024 (Anderson and Neumann 1996, Guy et al. 2007).

SPECIES	STOCK	QUALITY (PSD)	HARVEST (PSD-H)[1]	PREFERRED (PSD-P)	MEMORABLE (PSD-M)	TROPHY (PSD-T)[2]
Bluegill	3	6	7	8	10	12
Rock bass	4	7		9	11	13
Black crappie	5	8	9	10	12	15
Yellow perch	5	8	9	10	12	15
Largemouth bass	8	12		15	20	25
Smallmouth bass	7	11		14	17	20
Northern pike	14	21	32	28	34	44

1. Lengths of fish found socially (bluegill, black crappie, yellow perch) or legally (northern pike) acceptable for harvest by anglers. Largemouth and smallmouth bass PSD-H values left blank due to 14–18-inch protected slot.

Table 6. Summary of catch and catch-per-unit effort (CPUE) by sampling period during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

	CATCH				CPUE (FISH/NET-NIGHT)		(FISH/MILE)
Species	**SN1**	**SN3**	**SE2**	**Total**	**SN1**	**SN3**	**SE2**
Rock bass	198	212	13	423	1.5	11.8	3.6
Bluegill	82	223	80	385	0.6	12.4	22.2
Largemouth bass	36	0	201	237	0.3	0.0	55.8
Northern pike	118	2	1	121	0.9	0.1	0.3
Yellow perch	74	31	12	117	0.6	1.7	3.3
Pumpkinseed	7	37	4	48	0.1	2.1	1.1
Green sunfish	0	34	1	35	0.0	1.9	0.3
Burbot	34	0	0	34	0.3	0.0	0.0
Brown trout	29	0	3	32	0.2	0.0	0.8
Smallmouth bass	1	1	22	24	0.0	0.1	6.1
Yellow bullhead	7	4	1	12	0.1	0.2	0.3
Black crappie	7	3	1	11	0.1	0.2	0.3
White sucker	5	0	0	5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Walleye	4	0	0	4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Brown bullhead	0	1	0	1	0.0	0.1	0.0
Golden shiner	1	0	0	1	0.0	0.0	0.0
Rainbow trout	1	0	0	1	0.0	0.0	0.0
	604	548	339	1,491			

Table 7. Summary of lengths (inches), PSD, ages and relative weights of gamefish sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin. Lengths are given in inches.

SPECIES	PERIOD	NUMBER COLLECTED	NUMBER MEASURED[1]	LENGTH RANGE	MEAN LENGTH	MEDIAN LENGTH	PSD	PSD-H[2]	PSD-P	PSD-M	AGE RANGE	MEAN RELATIVE WEIGHT
Bluegill	SN1	82	82	4.1-10.4	6.4	6.1						
Bluegill	SN3	223	223	3.6-10.1	6.2	5.2						
Bluegill	SE2	80	80	2.5-10.2	7.0	7.8						
Bluegill	ALL	385	385	2.5-10.4	6.4	6.3	53	44	36	1	2-11	100.9
Yellow perch	ALL	117	116	5.0-11.6	7.0	6.9	19	6	2	0	2-9	93.5
Black crappie	ALL	11	11	5.5-13.3	9.7	10.2	75	71	53	12	2-8	98.6
Largemouth bass	ALL	237	237	4.9-19.4	11.2	11.2	39	14	6	1	1-19	93.6
Smallmouth bass	ALL	24	24	6.1-13.8	9.9	9.9					2-8	92.7
Northern pike	ALL	103	103	12.7-43.7	35.3	31.5	80	50	63	43	2-11	114.2

1. Number measured is the number of unique fish measurements included in calculation of length range, mean and median length for each species.
2. PSD-H reported for largemouth bass is PSD-14 because that is the most common minimum length limit for largemouth bass in Wisconsin. Largemouth bass from 14-18 inches may not be kept in Devils Lake.

Table 8. Bluegill size-specific electrofishing catch rates (CPUE; fish/mile) from SE2 surveys of lakes in the Poynette management area, 2013-2025.

			CPUE				AREA CPUE RANK			
Lake[1,2]	**County**	**Year**	**Total**	**6"+**	**7"+**	**8"+**	**Total**	**6”+**	**7”+**[3]	**8”+**
Silver	Columbia	2016	345.0	5.0	0.0	0.0	1	20		
Tarrant	Columbia	2018	267.0	37.0	22.0	7.0	2	13	7	4
Lazy	Columbia	2024	242.0	160.0	108.0	23.0	3	1	1	1
Blass	Sauk	2017	190.0	50.0	27.3	1.3	4	7	4	9
Fish	Dane	2021	189.0	16.0	1.0	0.0	5	18	20	
Dutch Hollow	Sauk	2016	141.3	69.3	30.7	6.0	6	3	2	5
Fish	Dane	2015	135.0	46.0	8.0	0.0	7	9	14	
Seeley	Sauk	2016	123.4	85.5	14.5	0.0	8	2	12	
Mud	Dane	2015	120.7	38.0	0.0	0.0	9	12		
Mirror	Sauk	2025	108.7	54.0	18.7	1.3	10	5	9	10
White Mound	Sauk	2019	102.0	48.0	22.0	7.0	11	8	6	3
George	Columbia	2013	101.0	53.5	19.2	0.0	12	6	8	
West	Columbia	2019	86.7	2.7	1.3	0.0	13	22	19	
Crystal	Dane/Col.	2015	79.3	62.0	28.7	0.0	14	4	3	
Swan	Columbia	2018	74.0	38.7	6.7	0.7	15	11	15	11
Redstone	Sauk	2022	61.0	17.5	3.0	0.0	16	16	16	
Virginia	Sauk	2016	53.9	38.8	26.7	4.2	17	10	5	6
Wisconsin	Col/Sauk	2023	45.3	28.7	8.7	1.7	18	14	13	8
Park	Columbia	2021	43.0	15.0	2.0	0.0	19	19	18	
Delton	Sauk	2025	38.0	24.0	17.0	0.0	20	15	10	
Spring	Columbia	2018	32.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	21	23		
La Valle Millpond	Sauk	2021	29.0	1.0	0.0	0.0	22	25		
Devils	**Sauk**	**2024**	**22.2**	**16.7**	**15.0**	**10.0**	**23**	**17**	**11**	**2**
Wyona	Columbia	2022	22.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	24	24		
Crystal (Peter Helland)	Columbia	2014	20.0	2.9	2.9	2.9	25	21	17	7

1. Mud Lake and Fish Lake are listed separately for 2015 and as one combined lake for 2021. In 2019 rising lake levels inundated Fish Lake Road and two lakes became one.
2. Crystal Lake in Columbia County (2014) is 28 acres and is located within the Peter Helland Wildlife Area near Pardeeville.
3. Lakes with size-specific CPUE values of zero do not receive a ranking.

Table 9. Yellow perch size structure metrics for lakes in the Poynette management area, 2015-2025. Lengths are given in inches.

LAKE[1]	COUNTY	YEAR	NUMBER COLLECTED	NUMBER MEASURED	PSD	PSD-9	PSD-P	PSD-M	MEAN LENGTH	MEDIAN LENGTH	LARGEST FISH
Devils	**Sauk**	**2024**	**117**	**116**	**75**	**71**	**53**	**12**	**9.7**	**10.2**	**13.3**
White Mound	Sauk	2019	131	130	71	42	16	0	8.6	8.7	11.9
Swan	Columbia	2018	887	887	26	8	2	0	7.3	7.2	12.0
Crystal	Dane	2015	590	590	23	3	0	0	7.4	7.5	9.8
Redstone	Sauk	2022	245	226	19	6	2	0	7.0	6.9	11.6
Delton	Sauk	2025	2,600	694	18	1	0	0	7.4	7.3	9.3
Wisconsin	Col/Sauk	2023	614	382	11	4	1	0	6.8	6.6	10.7
Park	Columbia	2021	4,718	1,197	3	1	0	0	6.1	6.0	11.3
Mirror	Sauk	2025	42	41					7.1	6.7	10.7
Fish	Dane	2021	369	72					6.3	6.3	8.8

1. Fish Lake in Dane County includes Mud Lake because the lakes were combined when rising lake levels inundated Fish Lake Road in 2019 and did not recede.

Table 10. Largemouth bass size-specific electrofishing catch rates (CPUE; fish/mile) from SE2 surveys of lakes in the Poynette management area, 2013-2025.

			CPUE						AREA CPUE RANK[4]					
LAKE[1,2,3]	COUNTY	YEAR	Total	8"+	12"+	14"+	18"+	20"+	Total	8"+	12"+	14"+	18"+	20"+
White Mound	Sauk	2019	273.2	243.2	102.4	5.2	1.6	0.8	1	1	2	11	4	1
Virginia	Sauk	2016	207.9	201.2	172.7	2.4	0.0	0.0	2	2	1	17		
Crystal	Columbia	2014	190.5	184.8	23.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	3	3	6			
Tarrant	Columbia	2018	81.0	76.0	44.0	31.0	0.0	0.0	4	5	3	1		
Dutch Hollow	Sauk	2016	79.2	76.2	43.3	11.3	0.7	0.0	5	4	4	3	8	
Silver	Columbia	2016	72.4	59.6	23.2	10.4	0.0	0.0	6	6	7	4		
Devils	**Sauk**	**2024**	**55.8**	**50.6**	**16.1**	**3.9**	**0.6**	**0.0**	**7**	**7**	**9**	**14**	**9**	
George	Columbia	2013	49.5	45.5	13.1	1.0	0.0	0.0	8	8	11	20		
Fish	Dane	2015	35.3	26.5	23.9	15.6	2.1	0.3	9	11	5	2	1	5
Lazy	Columbia	2024	34.3	27.8	19.5	10.0	0.8	0.0	10	10	8	5	7	
Blass	Sauk	2017	32.7	28.7	12.0	6.7	0.0	0.0	11	9	12	9		
Redstone	Sauk	2022	28.6	19.8	11.6	5.6	0.1	0.0	12	14	13	10	13	
Mirror	Sauk	2025	28.2	23.2	13.7	8.7	0.3	0.0	13	12	10	6	11	
Crystal	Dane/Col.	2015	23.7	22.1	11.3	7.6	2.1	0.5	14	13	14	7	2	2
Fish-Mud	Dane	2021	20.8	18.5	9.6	4.6	1.7	0.4	15	15	15	12	3	4
Mud	Dane	2015	18.7	4.7	1.3	0.7	0.0	0.0	16	22	22	21		
Wyona	Columbia	2022	9.9	9.3	8.1	6.9	0.3	0.0	17	17	16	8	12	
Delton	Sauk	2025	9.3	9.3	5.4	1.7	0.3	0.0	18	16	17	19	10	
Swan	Columbia	2018	7.4	7.0	5.0	3.9	0.9	0.4	19	18	18	15	6	3
Spring	Columbia	2018	7.0	6.0	4.0	4.0	0.0	0.0	20	19	19	13		
Park	Columbia	2021	6.3	5.4	3.7	2.9	1.0	0.0	21	20	20	16	5	
Wisconsin	Columbia	2023	4.8	4.8	3.4	1.8	0.1	0.0	22	21	21	18	14	
West	Columbia	2019	2.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	23					
Mean			55.6	50.0	24.8	6.3	0.5	0.1						
Median			28.6	23.2	12.0	4.6	0.3	0.0						

1. Crystal Lake in Columbia County is 28 acres and is located within the Peter Helland Wildlife Area near Pardeeville.
2. Mud Lake and Fish Lake are listed separately for 2015 and as one combined lake for 2021. In 2019 rising lake levels caused the two lakes to become one.
3. West Lake suffered a winter kill in the winter of 2018-2019 due to low oxygen levels. The lake lost most of its largemouth bass as a result.
4. Lakes with size-specific CPUE values of zero do not receive a ranking.

Table 11. Mean length at age-6 (MLA-6) of largemouth bass in lakes in the Poynette management area, 2014-2024.

LAKE	COUNTY	YEAR	MLA-6
Park	Columbia	2021	16.6
Wisconsin	Col/Sauk	2023	16.0
Fish	Dane	2021	15.8
Spring	Columbia	2018	15.6
Delton	Sauk	2014	15.4
Swan	Columbia	2018	15.3
Lazy	Columbia	2024	15.1
Redstone	Sauk	2022	14.3
Mirror	Sauk	2014	14.2
Crystal	Dane/Col.	2015	13.1
White Mound	Sauk	2019	12.8
Virginia	Sauk	2016	12.5
Dutch Hollow	Sauk	2016	12.2
Devils	**Sauk**	**2024**	**11.9**
Area Mean			14.3
Area Median			14.3

Table 12. Smallmouth bass size-specific electrofishing catch rates (CPUE; fish/mile) from SE2 surveys of lakes in the Poynette management area, 2014-2025.

LAKE	COUNTY	YEAR	TOTAL	<7"	7"+	11"+	14"+	17"+	20"+
Delton	Sauk	2025	18.1	0.7	17.5	5.6	1.5	0.0	0.0
Wisconsin	Col/Sauk	2023	13.0	0.3	12.7	8.8	3.3	0.9	0.0
Devils	**Sauk**	**2024**	**6.1**	**0.3**	**5.8**	**1.1**	**0.0**	**0.0**	**0.0**
Redstone	Sauk	2022	4.6	0.8	3.9	2.4	0.5	0.1	0.0
Mirror	Sauk	2025	2.0	0.0	2.0	1.2	0.3	0.0	0.0
Wyona	Columbia	2022	1.5	0.0	1.5	0.9	0.6	0.0	0.0
Swan	Columbia	2018	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.0
Park	Columbia	2021	1.0	0.0	1.0	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0
Dutch Hollow	Sauk	2016	0.5	0.0	0.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Mean			5.3	0.2	5.1	2.4	0.7	0.1	0.0
Median			2.0	0.0	2.0	1.1	0.4	0.0	0.0

Figures

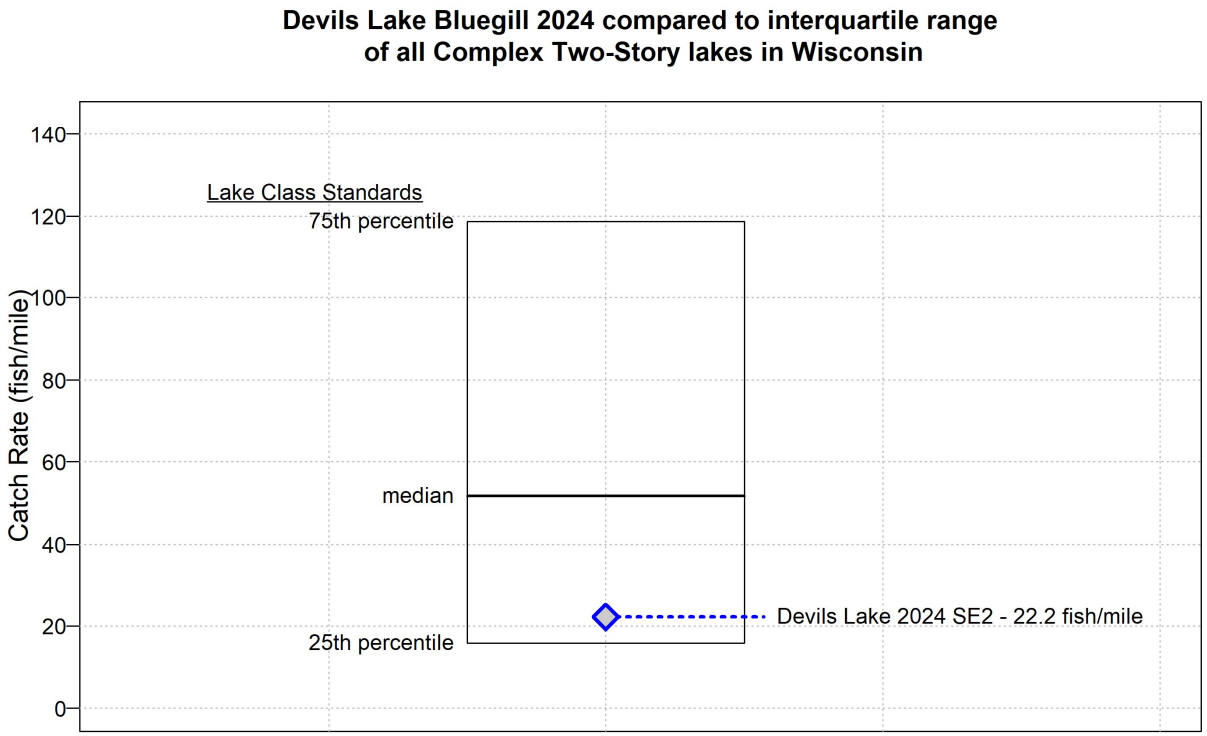

Figure 1. Bluegill electrofishing catch rate lake class comparison for Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

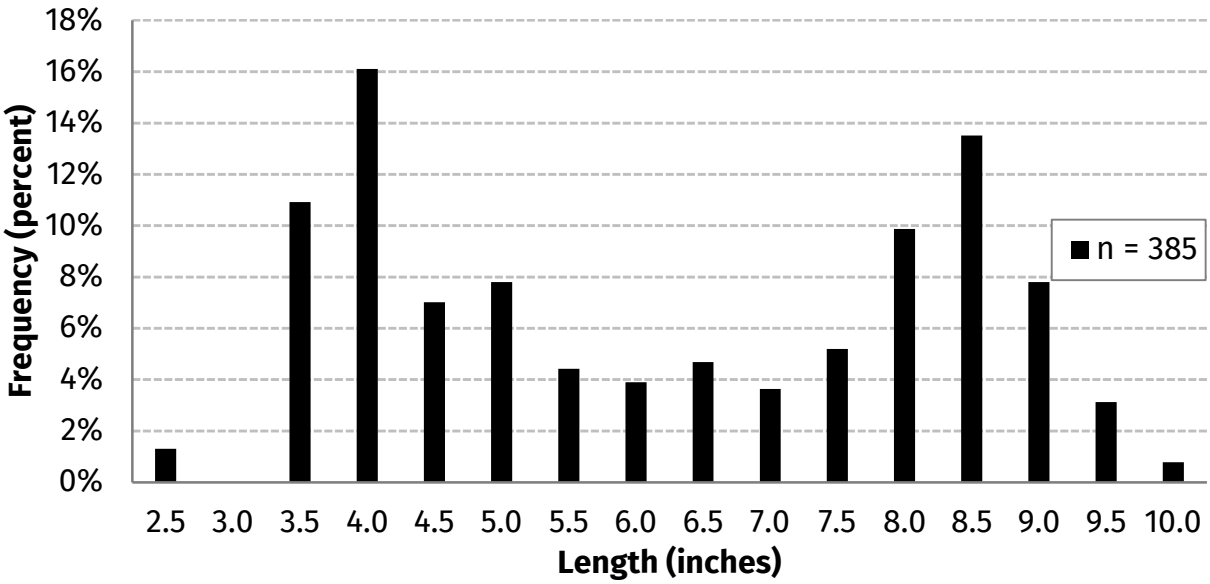

Figure 2. Length frequency distribution of bluegills sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

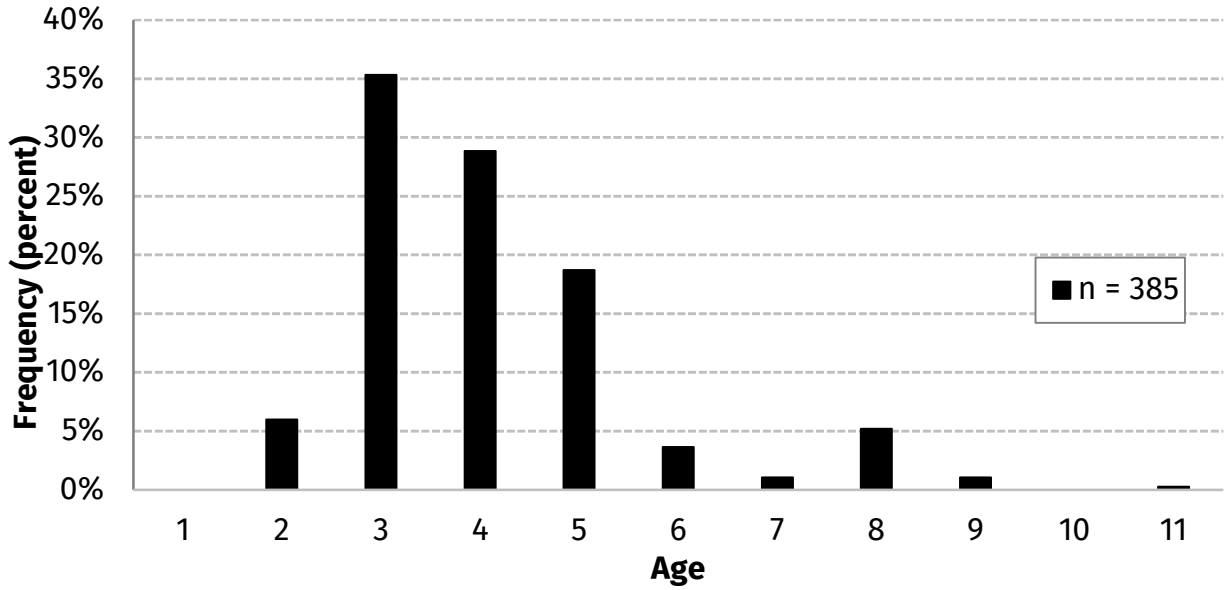

Figure 3. Age frequency distribution of bluegills sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

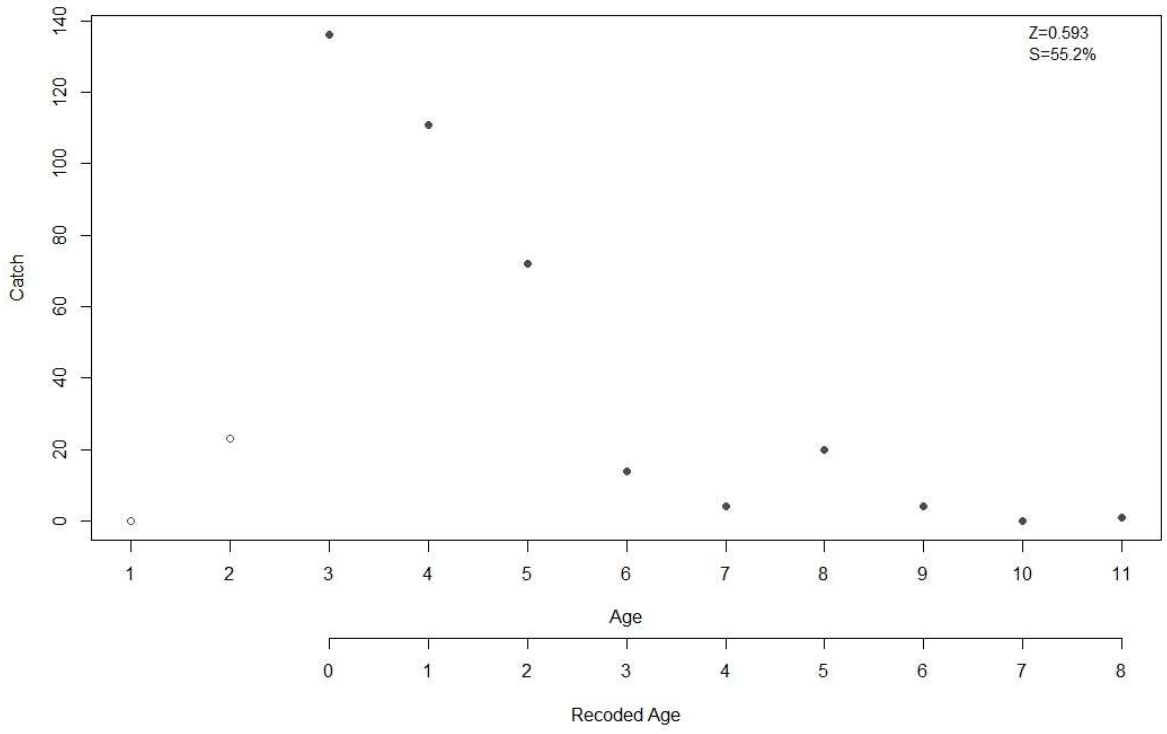

Figure 4. Chapman-Robson catch curve for bluegills sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

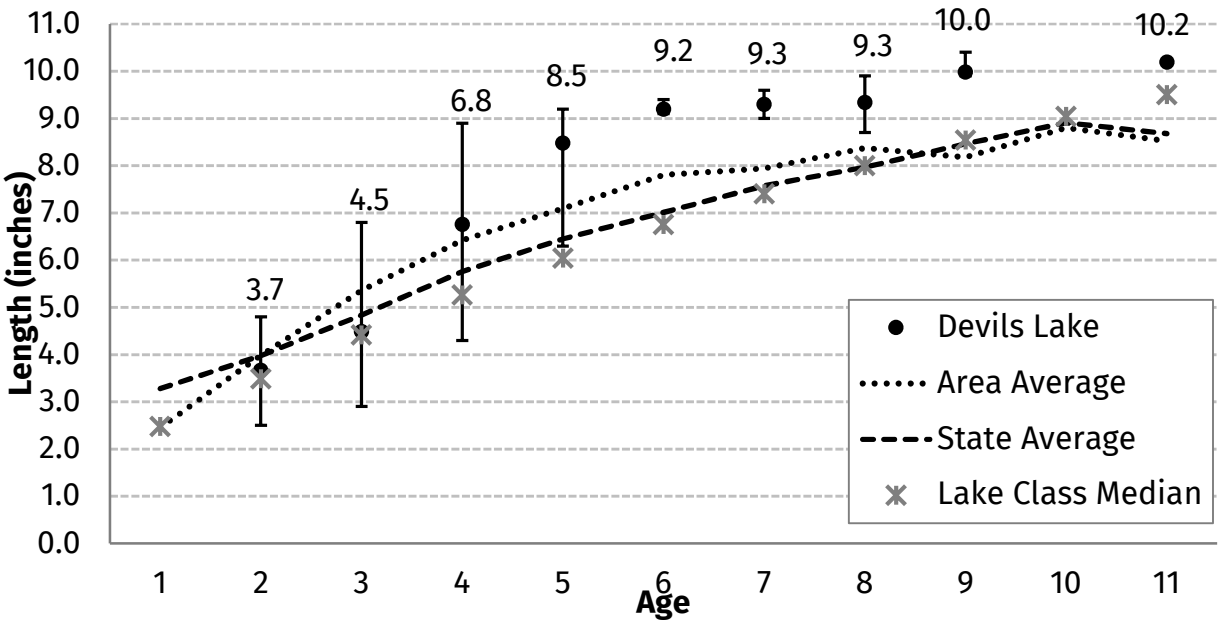

Figure 5. Mean length-at-age of bluegills (BLG) sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

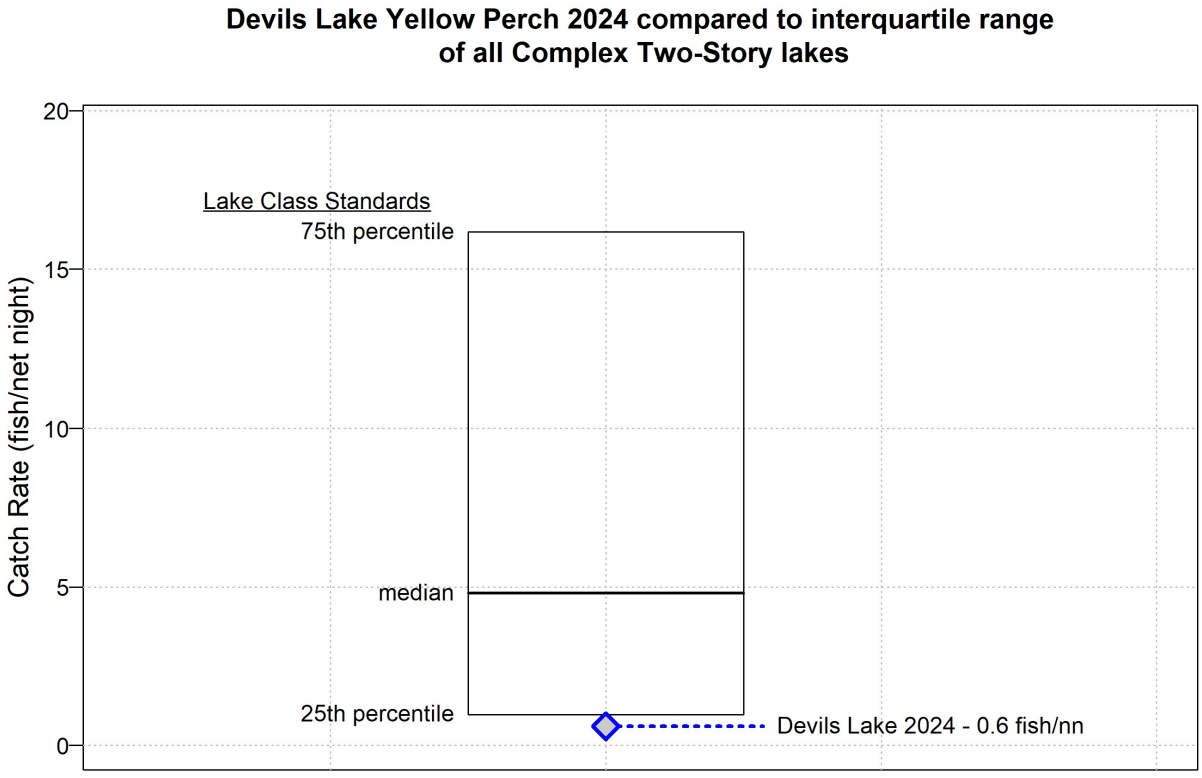

Figure 6. Yellow perch fyke net catch rate lake class comparison for Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

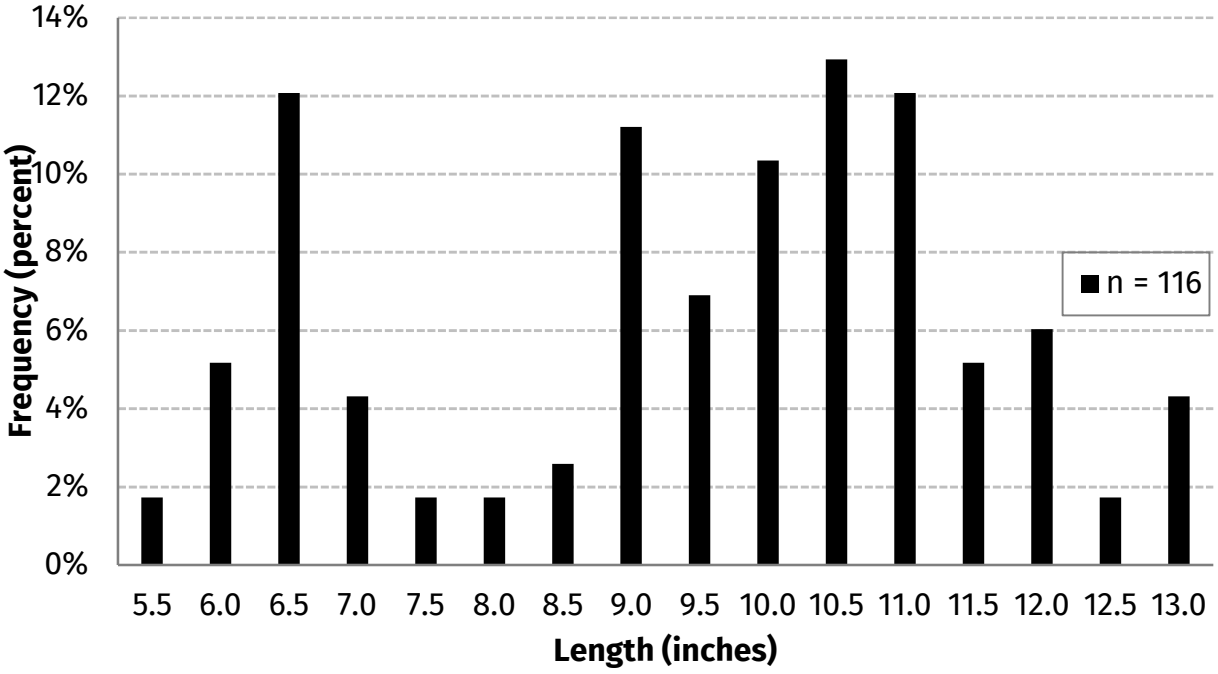

Figure 7. Length frequency distribution of yellow perch sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

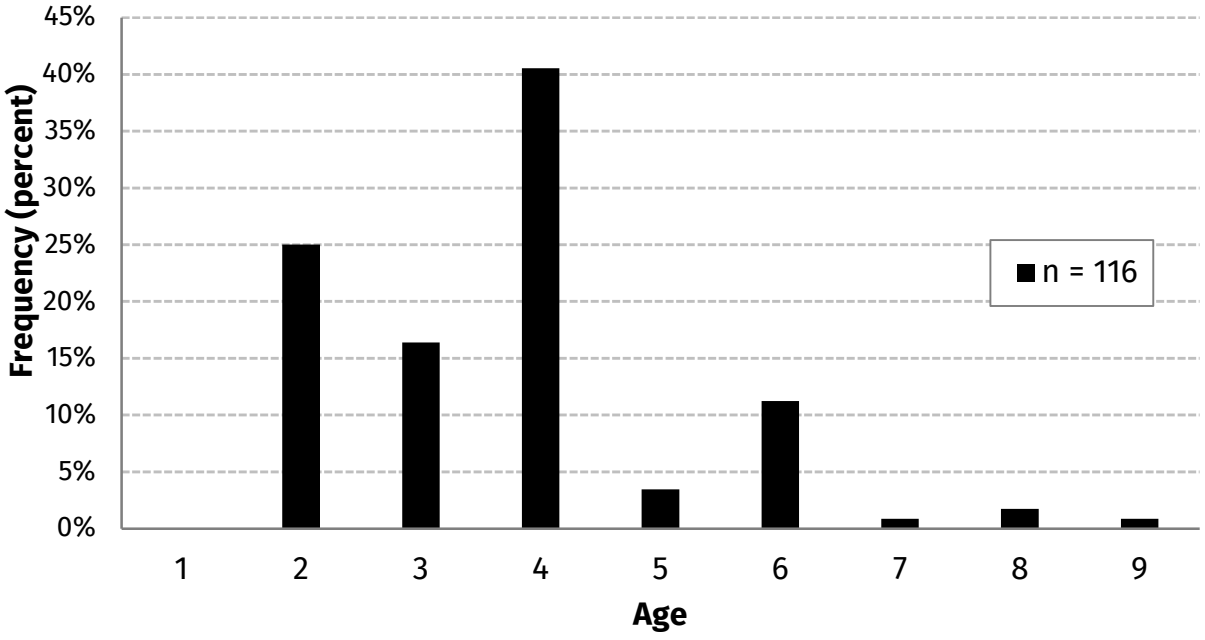

Figure 8. Age frequency distribution of yellow perch sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

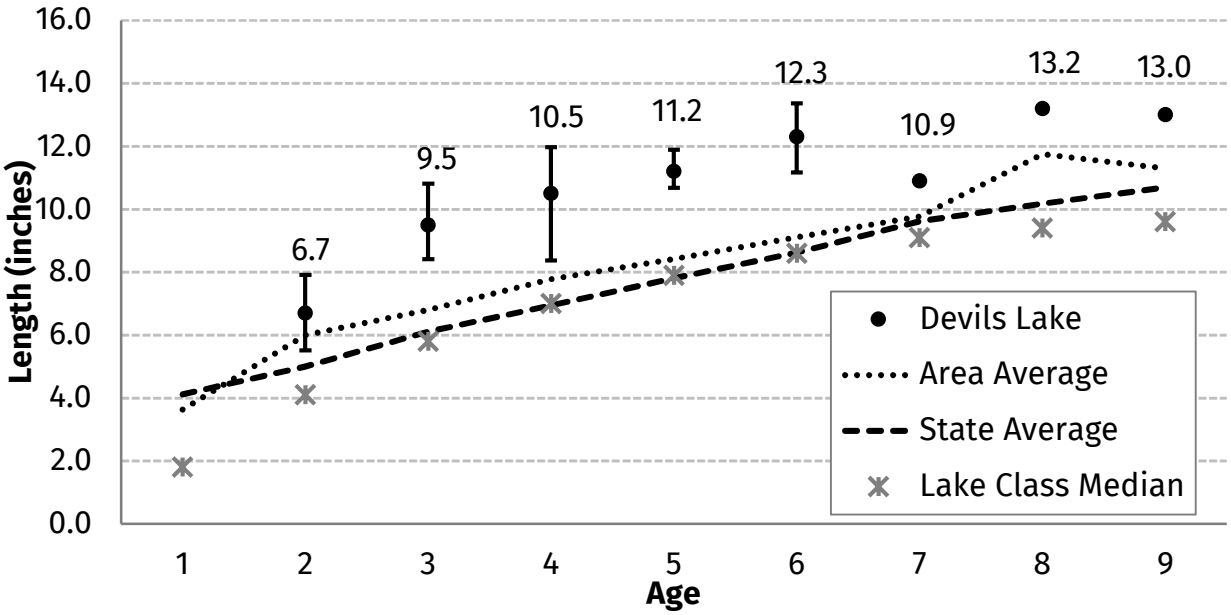

Figure 9. Mean length-at-age of yellow perch (YEP) sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

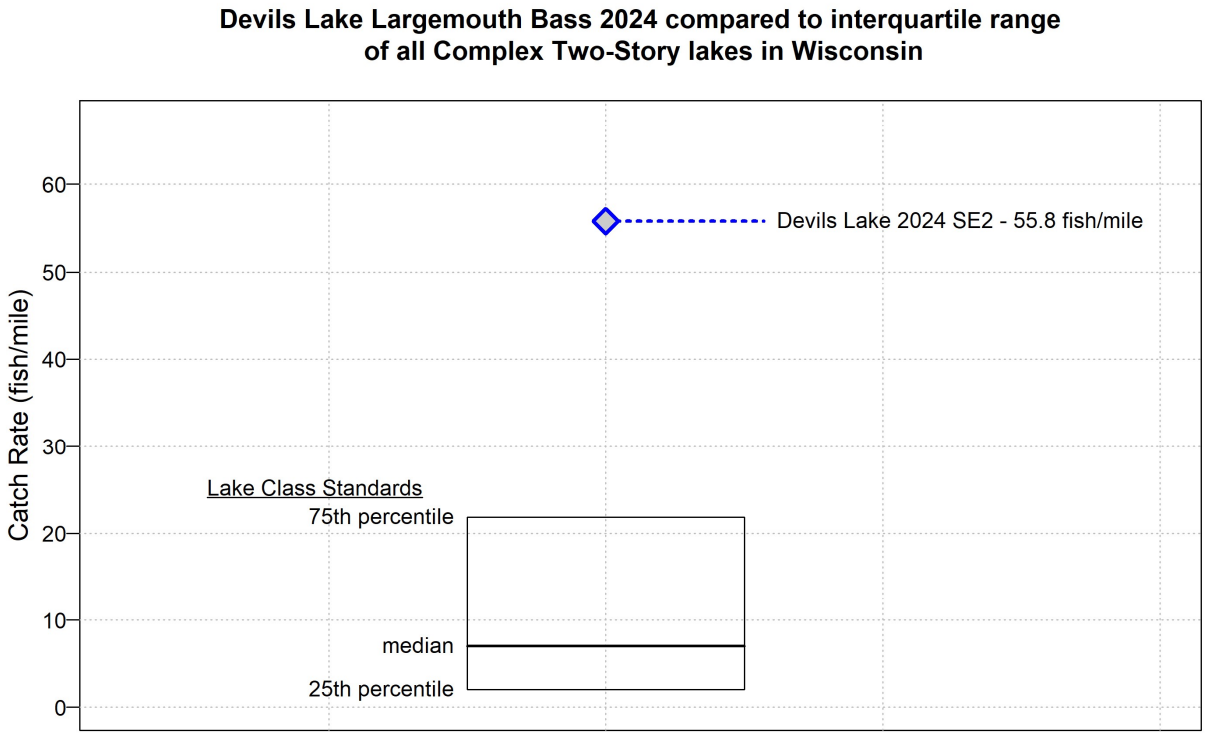

Figure 10. Largemouth bass electrofishing catch rate lake class comparison for Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

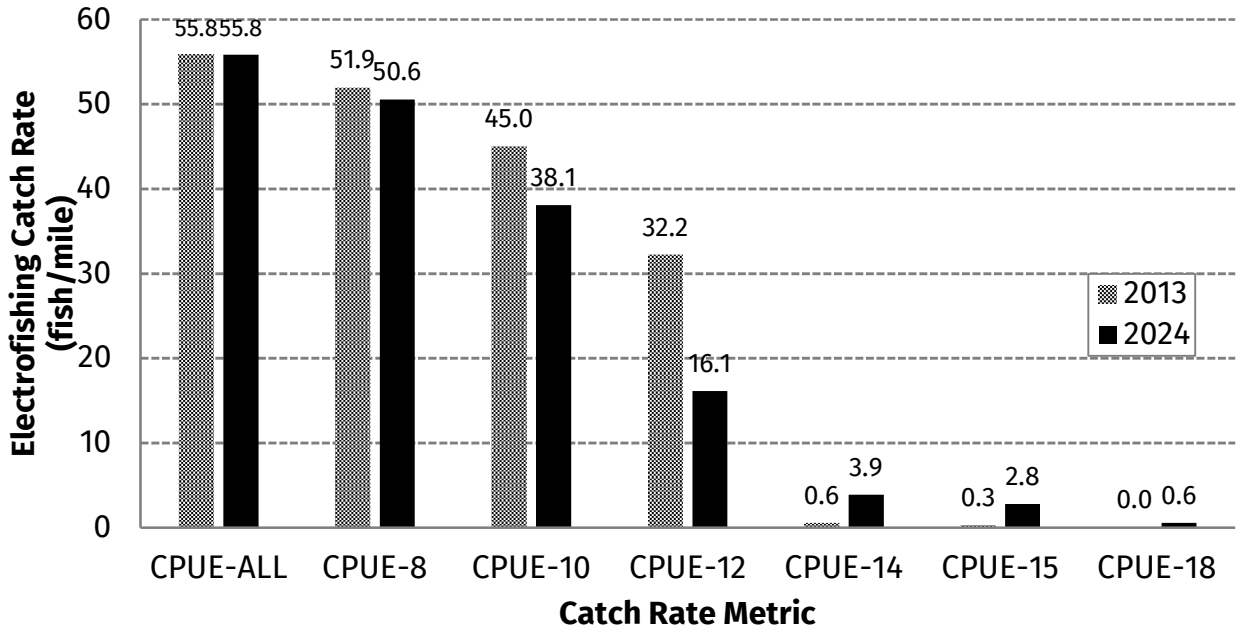

Figure 11. Largemouth bass size-specific electrofishing catch rates in Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin in 2013 and 2024.

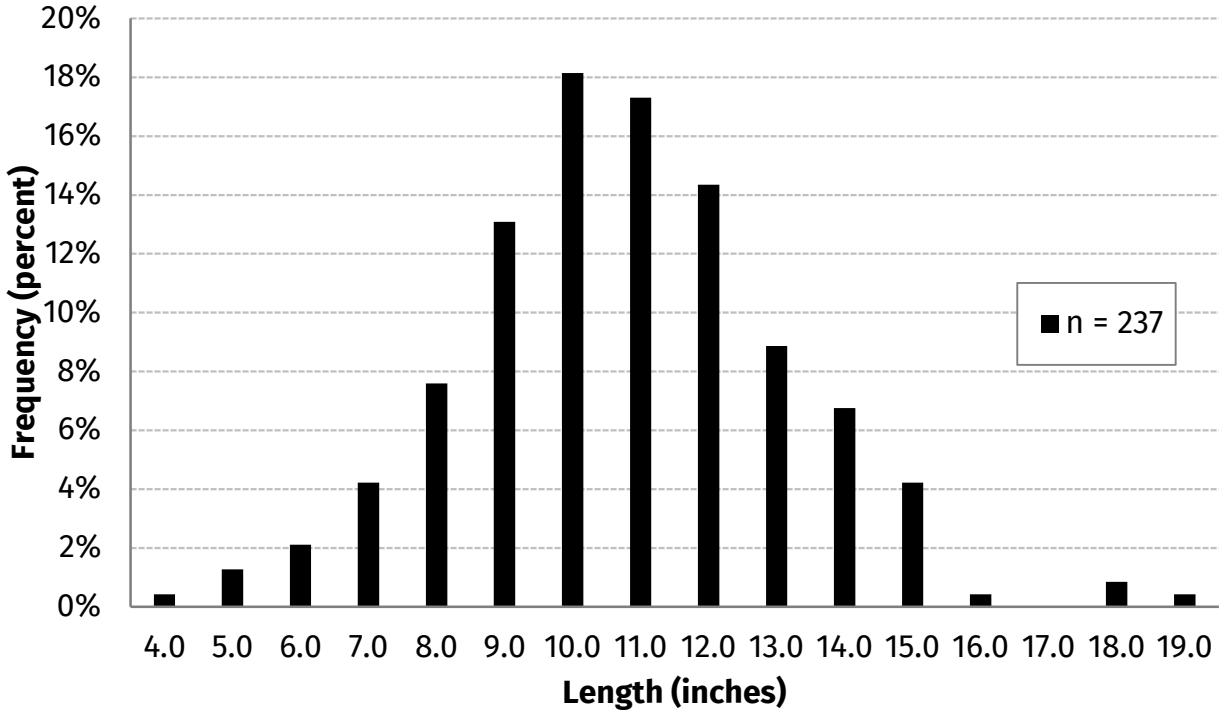

Figure 12. Length frequency distribution of largemouth bass sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

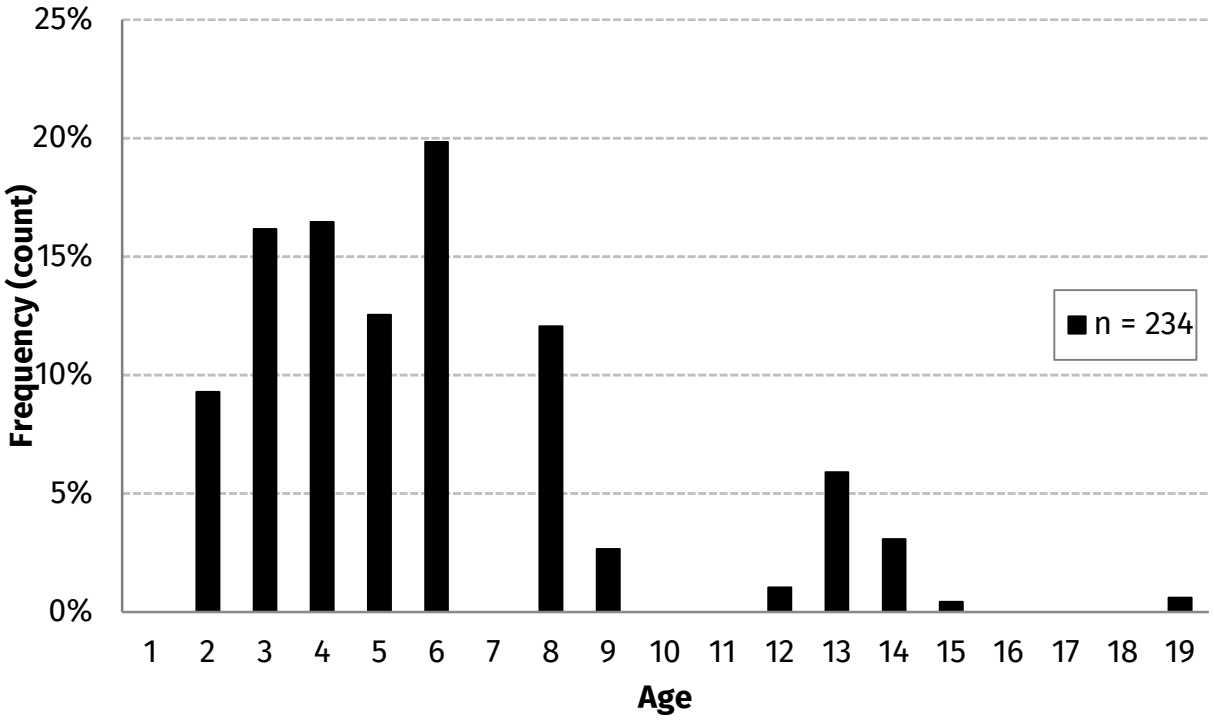

Figure 13. Age frequency distribution of largemouth bass sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

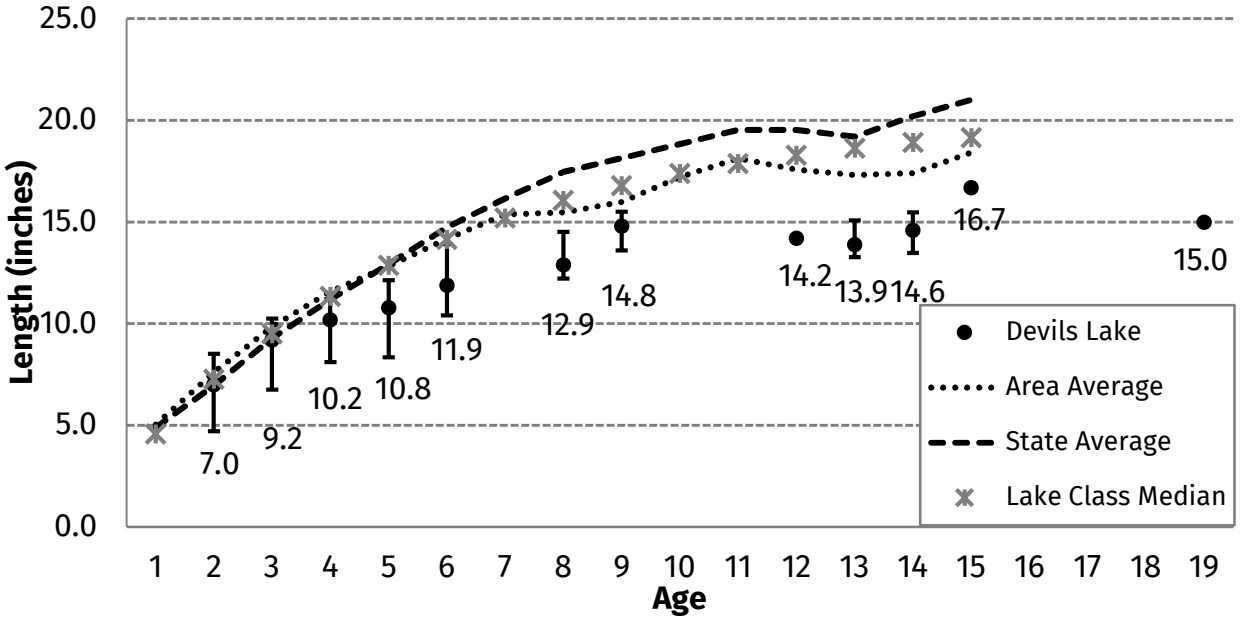

Figure 14. Mean length-at-age of largemouth bass (LMB) sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

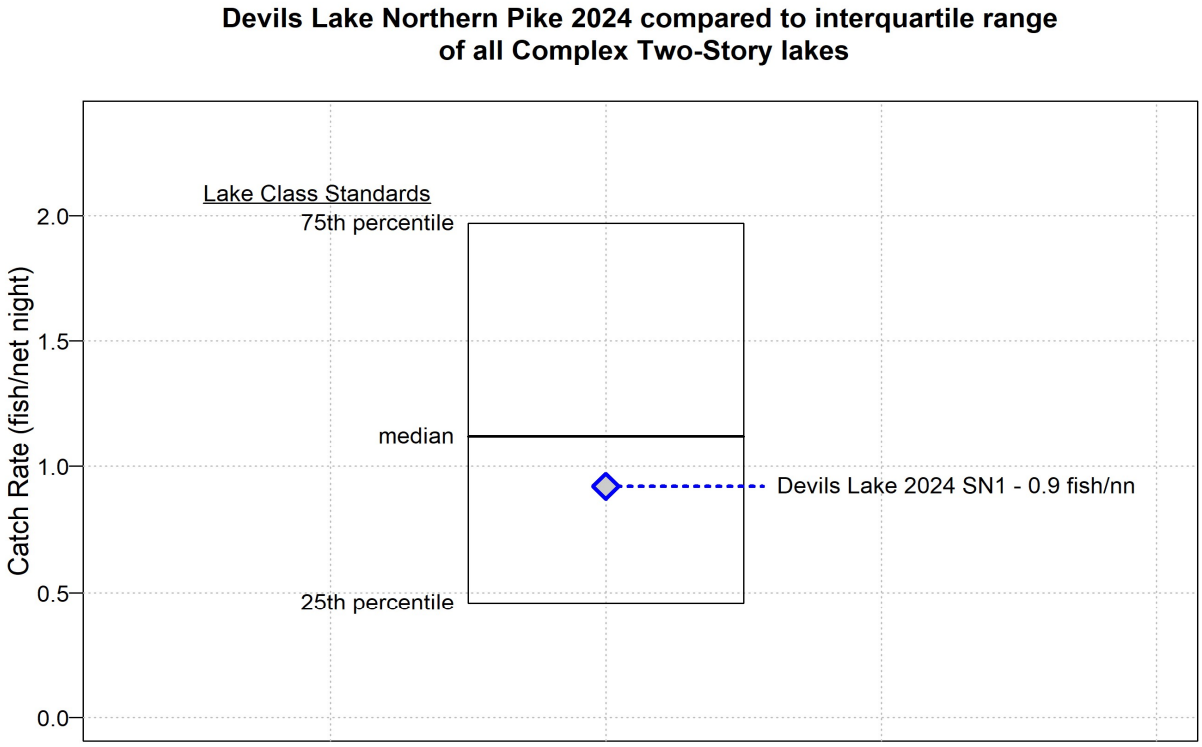

Figure 15. Northern pike fyke net catch rate lake class comparison for Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

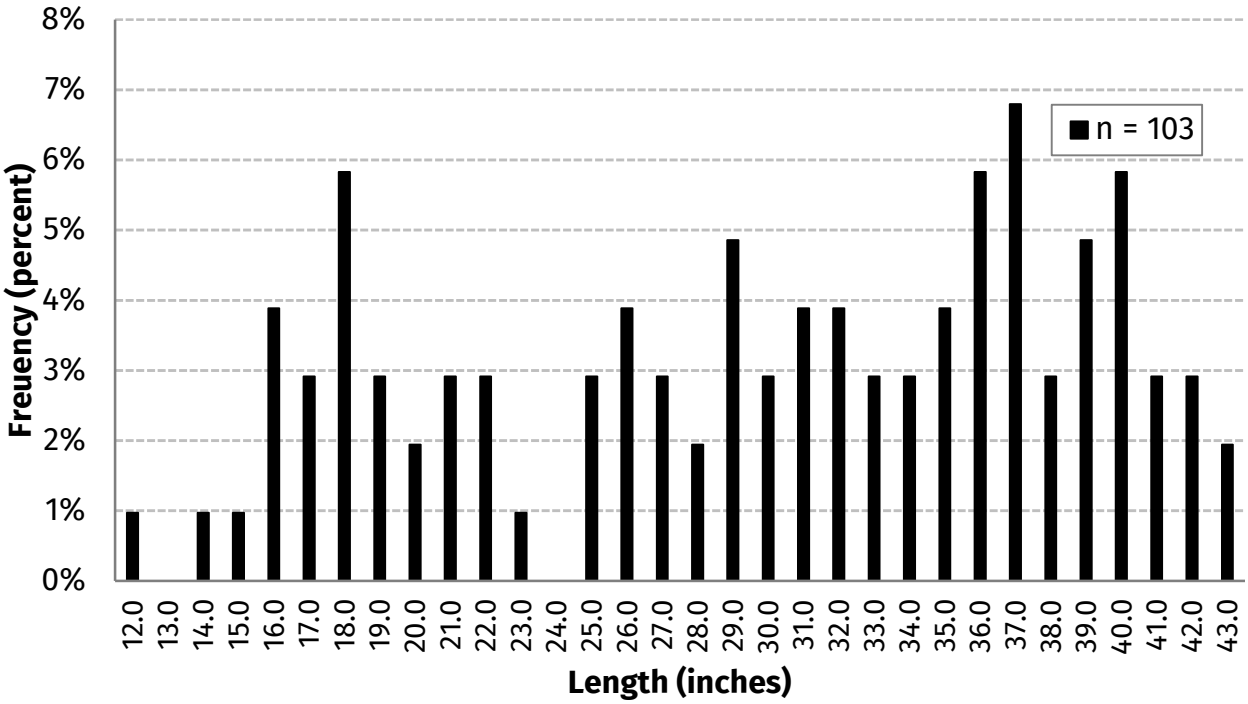

Figure 16. Length frequency distribution of northern pike sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

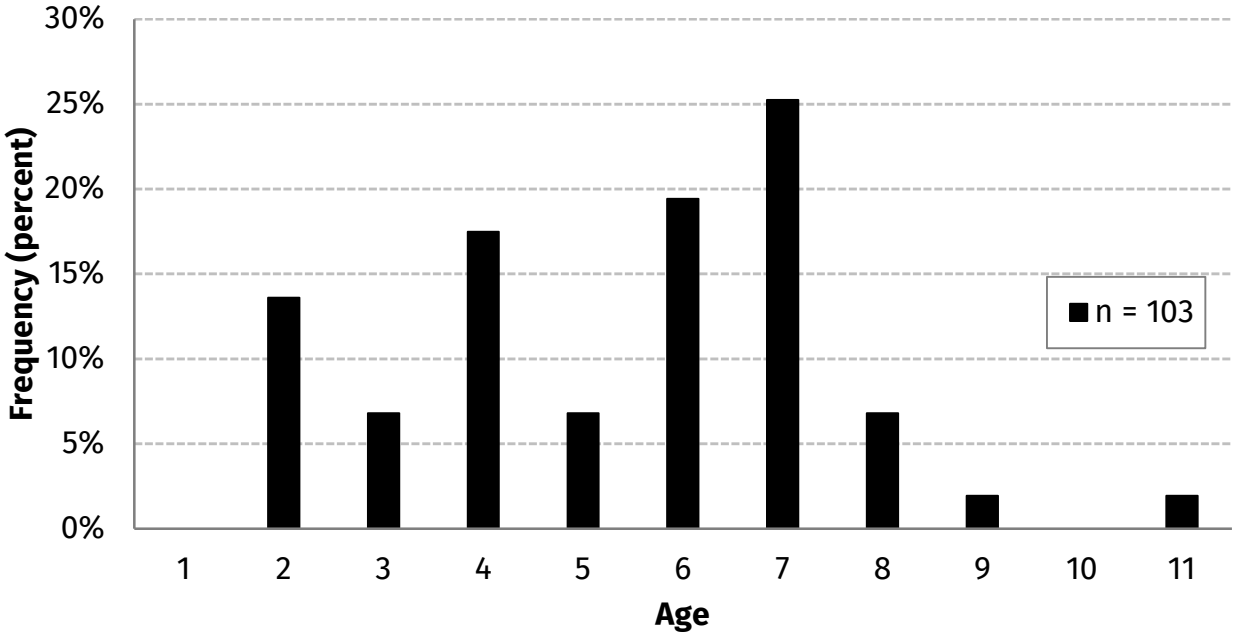

Figure 17. Age frequency distribution of northern pike sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

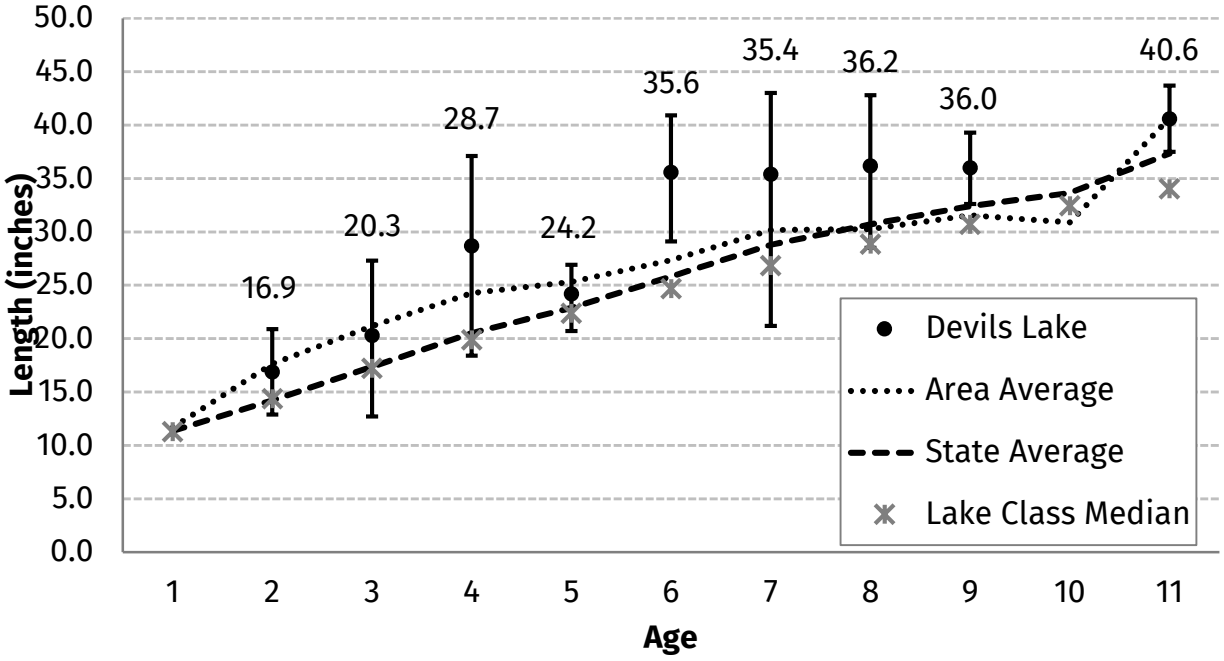

Figure 18. Mean length-at-age of northern pike sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

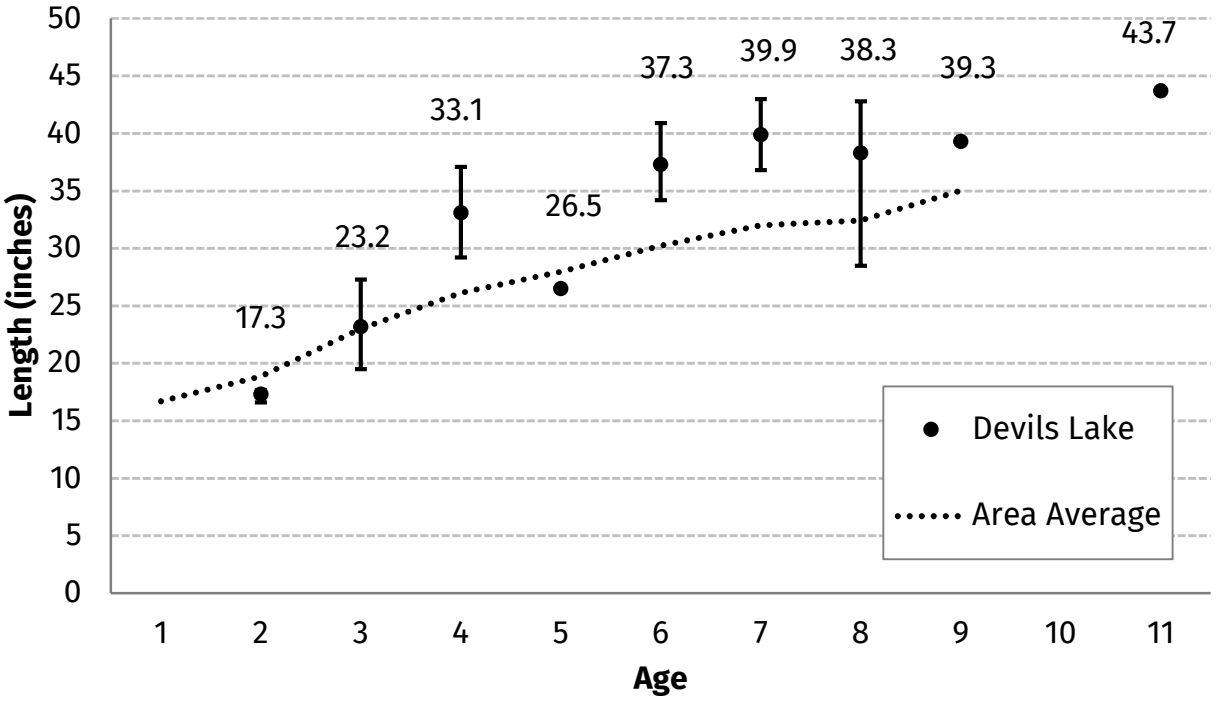

Figure 19. Mean length-at-age of female northern pike sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

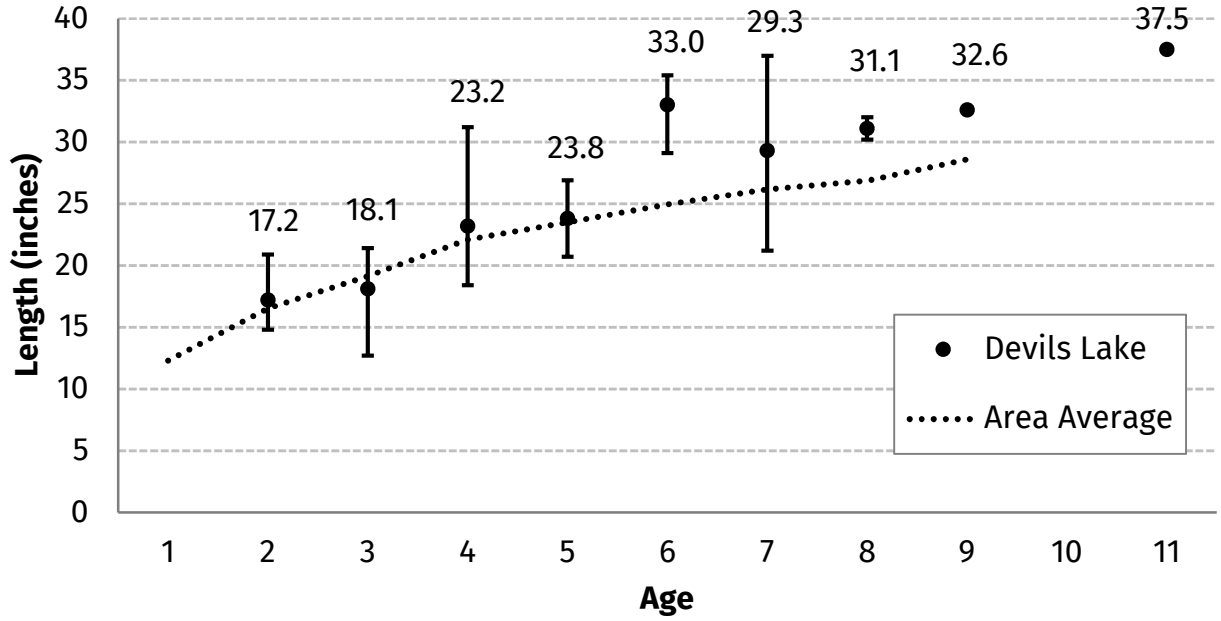

Figure 20. Mean length-at-age of male northern pike sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

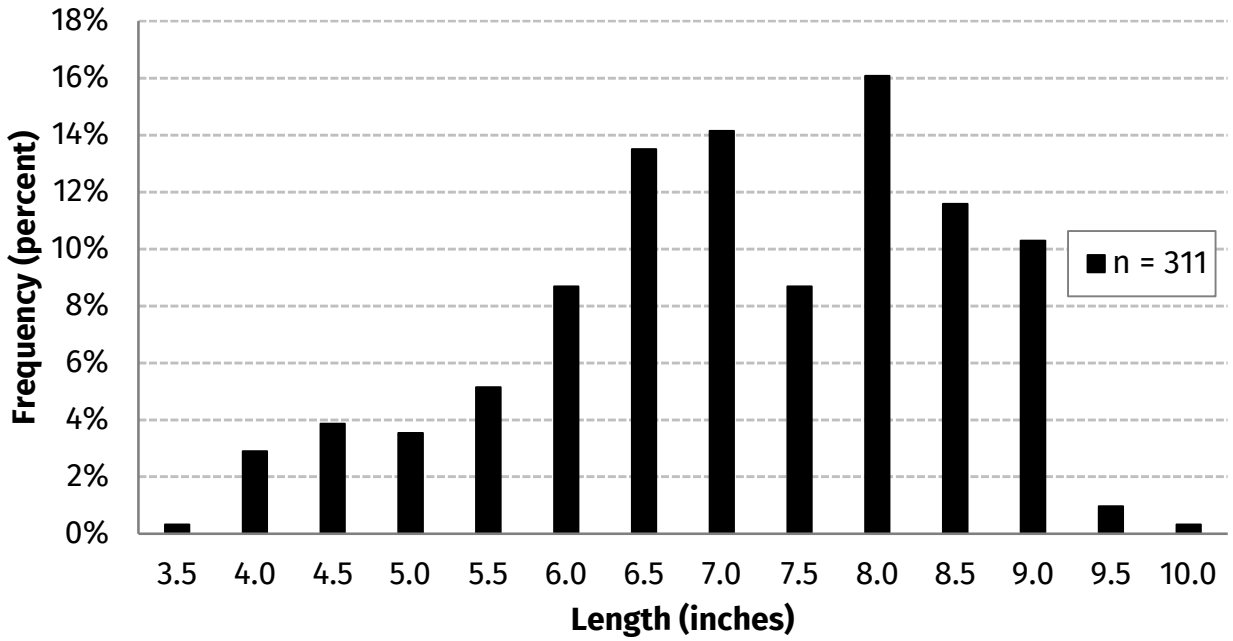

Figure 21. Length frequency distribution of rock bass sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

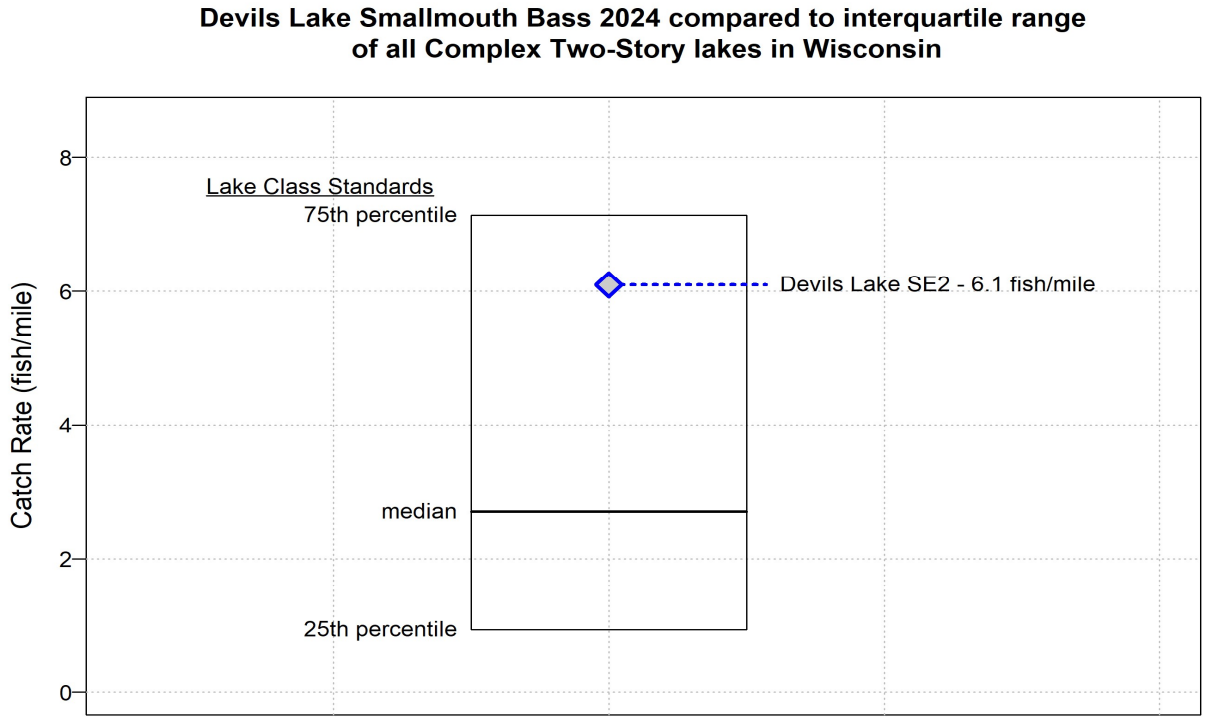

Figure 22. Smallmouth bass electrofishing catch rate lake class comparison for Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

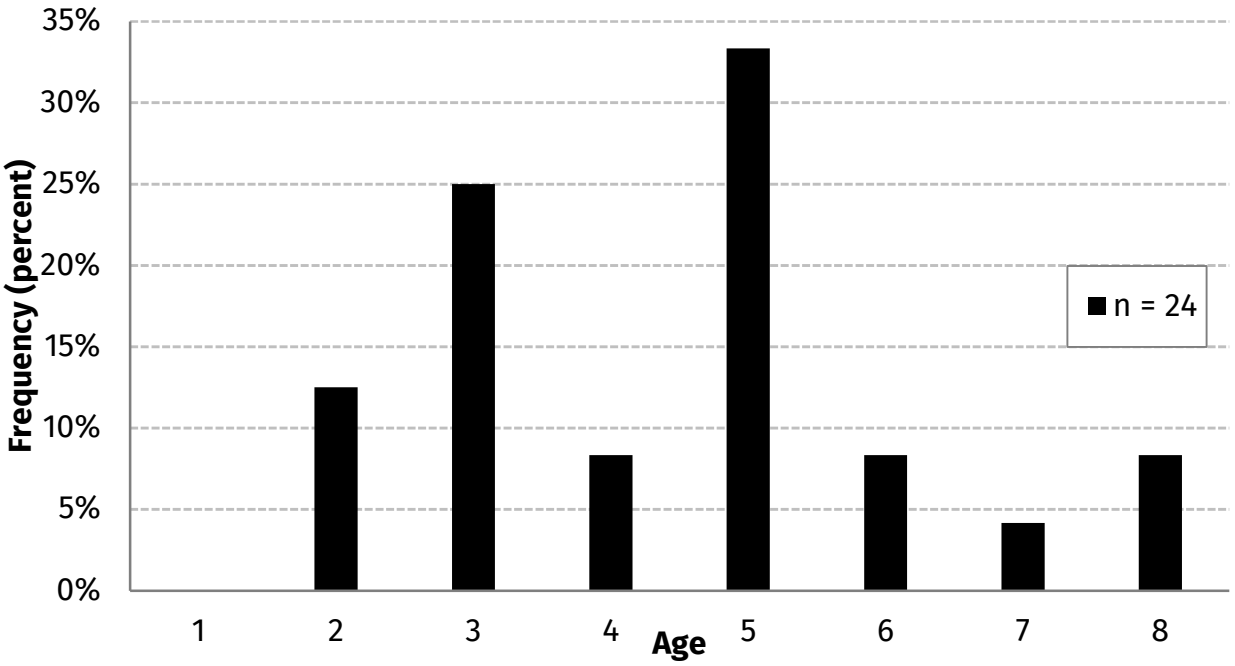

Figure 23. Age frequency distribution of smallmouth bass sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

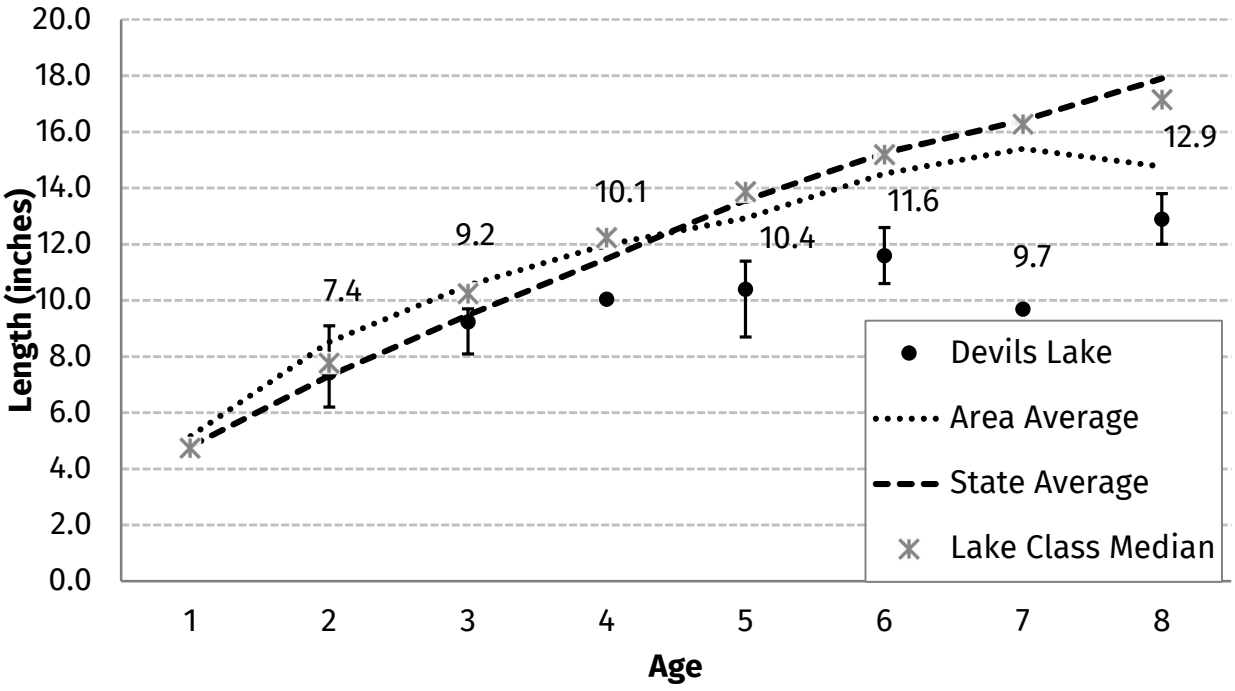

Figure 24. Mean length-at-age of smallmouth bass sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.

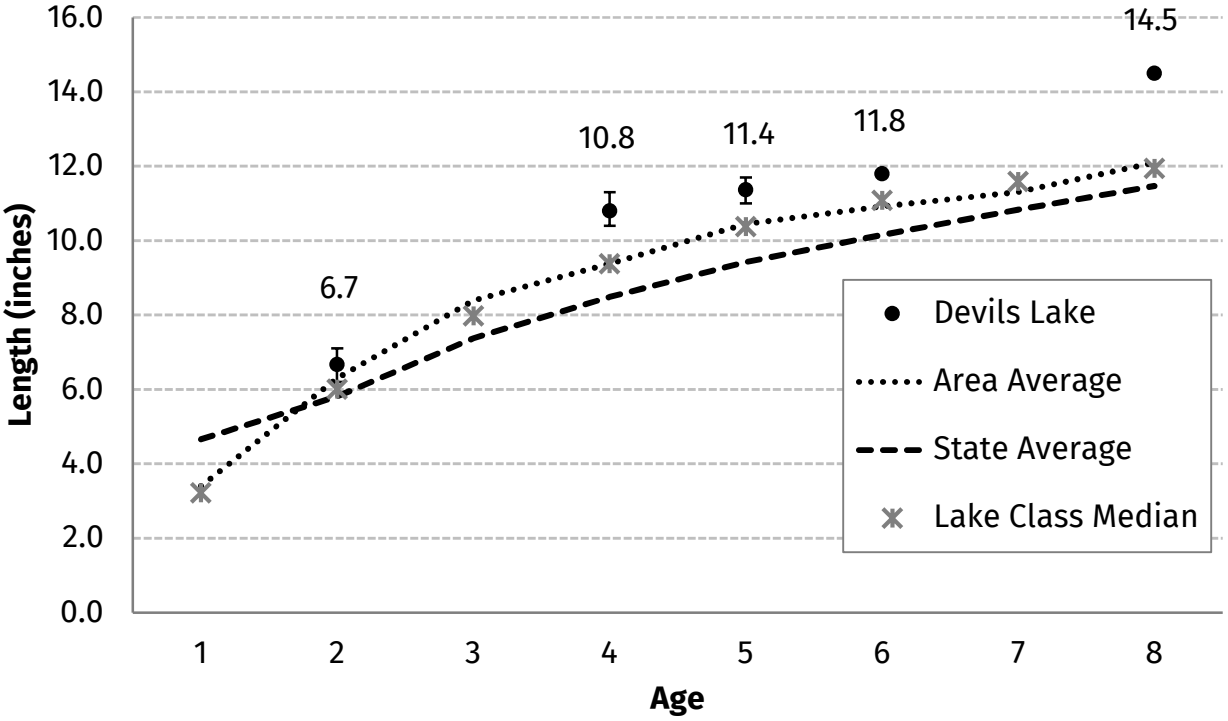

Figure 25. Mean length-at-age of black crappies sampled during the 2024 comprehensive fishery survey of Devils Lake, Sauk County, Wisconsin.