

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

PLUM LAKE

2021 – 2022 CREEL SURVEY REPORT

VILAS COUNTY



Treaty Fisheries Publication

Created by
Eric Brown & Jason Halverson
DNR Treaty Fisheries Technicians



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INTRODUCTION

Fish populations can fluctuate due to a variety of factors including natural forces like climate, reproductive success, predation and competition. Human activities such as fish harvest, stocking, habitat change and invasive species introduction can also have significant impacts. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) fisheries crews regularly conduct fishery surveys on lakes and reservoirs to gather the information needed to monitor changes, identify concerns, evaluate past management actions and to prescribe fishery management strategies. Netting and electrofishing surveys are used to gather data on the status of fish populations and communities, measuring such parameters as species composition, population size, reproductive success, size and age distribution and growth rates. Harvest is another key component of fisheries that we need to measure.

On many lakes in the Ceded Territory of northern Wisconsin, harvest of fish is divided between sport anglers and the six Ojibwe bands who harvest fish under rights reserved by federal treaties. The tribes harvest fish primarily using spearing, a highly efficient method, during a relatively short time in the spring. Every fish in the spear harvest is counted and reported, creating a complete census of the harvest.

We also measure the sport angler harvest to assess its impact on the fishery. It would be highly impractical and very costly to conduct a complete census of every angler who fishes on a lake, so we conduct creel surveys instead.

A creel survey is an assessment tool used to sample the fishing activities of anglers on a body of water to make estimates of harvest and other fishery parameters. Creel survey clerks work on randomly-selected days and shifts, forty hours per week. The survey is conducted during daylight hours throughout the open season for gamefish from the first Saturday in May through the first Sunday in

March. Creel surveys are not conducted in November when fishing effort is low and ice conditions are often unsafe.

Creel survey clerks travel their lakes using a boat or snowmobile to count the number of anglers at predetermined times and to interview anglers who have completed their fishing trip. Data are collected on what species they fished for, catch, harvest, lengths of fish harvested, marks (fin clips or tags) and hours of fishing effort. Collecting completed-trip data provides the most accurate assessment of angling activities and it avoids the need to disturb anglers while they are fishing.

A computer program is used to estimate catch and harvest of each species, catch and harvest rates and fishing effort by month, as well as for the year in total. Keep in mind that these are estimates based on the best information available and not a complete accounting of effort, catch and harvest. Accurate estimates require that we sample a sufficient and representative portion of the angling activity on a lake. The accuracy of creel survey results depends on good cooperation and truthful responses by anglers when a creel clerk interviews them.

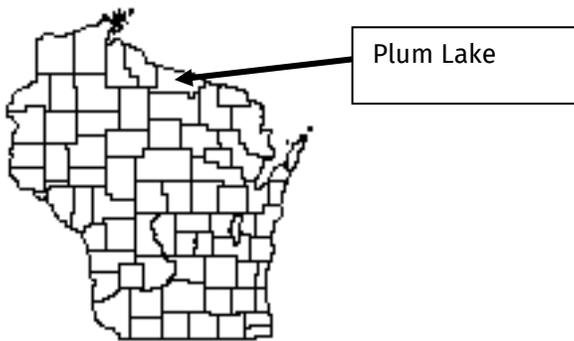
You may have encountered a DNR creel survey clerk on a recent fishing trip. We appreciate your cooperation during an interview. The survey only takes a few minutes of your time and it gives the DNR valuable information needed for management of the fishery.

This report provides estimates of:

1. Overall fishing effort (pressure)
2. Fishing effort directed at each species
3. Numbers of fish caught and harvested
4. Catch and harvest rates

Also included are a physical description of Plum Lake, discussion of results of the survey and detailed summaries by species of fishing effort, catch and harvest.

GENERAL LAKE INFORMATION



LOCATION

Plum Lake is located in Vilas County near the town of Sayer.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Plum Lake is a 1,033-acre drainage lake with a maximum depth of 57 feet. Littoral substrate consists primarily of sand, gravel, and lesser amounts of rock and muck. Plum Lake contains soft, slightly acidic, clear water of moderate transparency.

SEASONS SURVEYED

The period referred to in this report as the 2021-22 fishing season ran from May 1, 2021 through March 6, 2022. The open-water creel survey ran from May 1 through Oct. 31, 2021 and the ice fishing creel survey ran from Dec. 1, 2021 through March 6, 2022.

WEATHER

Ice-out on Plum Lake was around mid-April 2021. Fishable ice formed on Plum Lake around mid-December 2021.

FISHING REGULATIONS

The following seasons, daily bag limits and length limits were in place on Plum Lake during the 2021-22 fishing season:

SPECIES	SEASON	BAG LIMIT	MIN. SIZE
Largemouth Bass	5/ 01-3/ 06	1	18"
Smallmouth Bass	5/ 01-6/ 18	Catch&Release	
	6/ 19-3/ 06	1	18"
Only one Largemouth or Smallmouth may be kept			
Musky	5/ 01-12/ 31	1	40"
	On open water		
Northern Pike	5/ 01-3/ 06	5	None
Walleye	5/ 01-3/ 06	3	None
	14"- 18" Protected Slot, 1>18"		
Panfish	Open all year	25	None
Rock Bass	Open all year	None	None

SPECIES CATCH AND HARVEST INFORMATION

Summaries of angling effort, catch and harvest information for each species are in Table 2 and Figures 1-10, along with a comparison of these statistics with the previous creel survey in Table 2. Information about species with fishing seasons extending beyond March 6 should be considered minimum estimates. Each species page has up to five graphs depicting the following:

- DIRECTED FISHING EFFORT**
 The estimated number of hours during each month that anglers spent fishing for a species.
- TOTAL CATCH AND HARVEST**
 The estimated number of fish of the indicated species caught or harvested by all anglers, regardless of targeted species.
- SPECIFIC CATCH AND HARVEST RATES**
 The estimated number of hours it takes an angler to catch or harvest a fish of the indicated species. Only information from anglers who were specifically targeting that species is reported.
- LENGTH DISTRIBUTION OF HARVESTED FISH**
 All fish of a species that were measured by the clerk during the entire creel survey season.
- LARGEST AND AVERAGE LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH**

The largest and average (mean) length of a species of fish harvested. Only fish measured by the creel survey clerk are reported.

CREEL SURVEY RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SURVEY LOGISTICS

We encountered no unusual problems conducting the survey or calculating the projections contained in the report. This was the ninth time the DNR conducted a creel survey on Plum Lake. The last creel survey took place in 2018-19.

GENERAL ANGLER INFORMATION

Anglers spent 26,486 hours, or 25.6 hours per acre, fishing Plum Lake during the 2021-22 season (Table 1). That was lower than the Vilas County average of 33.8 hours per acre and higher than the fishing effort documented during the 2018-19 creel survey (18.4 hours per acre). June was the most heavily fished month (6,077 hours) and fishing effort was lightest in December (340 hours). The creel clerks were able to conduct 367 interviews throughout the survey.

RESULTS BY SPECIES

WALLEYE (Table 2, Figure 1)

Anglers spent 8,095 hours targeting Walleye. The greatest fishing effort for Walleye was in June (3,282 hours). December had the least amount of Walleye fishing effort (56 hours). The total catch of Walleye was 824 fish, with a harvest of 89. The highest catch (367 fish) and highest harvest (74 fish) occurred in October. Anglers fished an estimated 10.2 hours to catch and 91.3 hours to harvest a Walleye during the survey. The mean length of harvested Walleye was 15.2 inches and the largest measured was a 25.3-inch fish.

NORTHERN PIKE (Table 2, Figure 2)

Fishing effort directed at Northern Pike was 7,103 hours during the season. Northern Pike fishing effort was greatest in June (1,859 hours). The total catch of Northern Pike was 2,031 fish, with a harvest of 152. Anglers fished

an estimated 6.5 hours to catch a Northern Pike during the survey. The mean length of harvested Northern Pike was 22.4 inches and the largest measured was a 29.5-inch fish.

MUSKELLUNGE (Table 2, Figure 3)

Anglers spent 3,109 hours targeting Muskellunge during the season. Muskellunge fishing effort was greatest in August (1,426 hours). The total catch of Muskellunge was 30 fish and the highest catch (26 fish) occurred in July. Anglers fished an estimated 103.6 hours to catch a Muskellunge and there was no documented harvest during the survey.

SMALLMOUTH BASS (Table 2, Figure 4)

Smallmouth Bass were the most sought-after gamefish during the survey. Fishing effort targeted at Smallmouth Bass was 10,400 hours during the season. Smallmouth Bass fishing effort was greatest in June (2,494 hours). The total catch of Smallmouth Bass was 4,139 fish, with 13 harvested. The highest catch (1,340 fish) occurred in May. Anglers fished an estimated 2.7 hours to catch a Smallmouth Bass during the survey.

LARGEMOUTH BASS (Table 2, Figure 5)

Fishing effort directed at Largemouth Bass was 4,408 hours during the season. Largemouth Bass fishing effort was greatest in July (1,451 hours). Total catch of Largemouth Bass was 1,170 fish, with a harvest of five fish. The highest catch (499 fish) occurred in September. Anglers fished an estimated 6.1 hours to catch a Largemouth Bass during the survey.

PANFISH (Table 2, Figures 6-10)

YELLOW PERCH received 4,712 hours of directed fishing effort. The total catch of Yellow Perch was 1,112 fish, with 79 harvested. The mean length of Yellow Perch harvested was 8.2 inches.

BLUEGILL was the most sought after panfish species during the survey. Fishing effort directed at Bluegill was 5,687 hours. The total catch of Bluegill was 5,936 fish, with 1,973 harvested. The mean length of Bluegill harvested was 7.8 inches.

BLACK CRAPPIE received 4,318 hours of directed fishing effort. Anglers caught 1,255 Black Crappie and harvested 779. The mean length of Black Crappie harvested was 10.6 inches.

PUMPKINSEED received 1,827 hours of directed fishing effort. Anglers caught 114 Pumpkinseed and harvested 36. The mean length of Pumpkinseed harvested was 7.7 inches.

ROCK BASS did not receive any directed fishing effort. However, anglers caught 249 Rock Bass and harvested 15. The mean length of Rock Bass harvested was 9.5 inches.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The DNR would like to thank all the anglers who took the time to offer information about their fishing trip to the survey clerk. Without their cooperation, the survey would not have been possible.

We also thank our cooperator, Meadow Lofty, who generously allowed the DNR to keep a boat and the Plum Lake Golf Course for allowing the DNR snowmobile on thier property during this survey.

Completion of this survey was possible because of the efforts of the following fisheries management and treaty fisheries staff: John Kubisiak, Lawrence Eslinger, Joelle Underwood, Jason Halverson, Eric Brown and Bob Consolo. Creel clerks on Plum Lake during the survey period were Evan Priebe, Garrett Wilner, Mike Rynski and Joel Mommaerts.

This creel report was reviewed by John Kubisiak, Lawrence Eslinger and Eric Wegleitner of the DNR.

Additional copies of this report and those covering other local lakes can be obtained from the DNR Woodruff Service Center or online at:

<http://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Fishing/north/trtycrlsruvs.html>

Table 1. Sportfishing effort summary, Plum Lake, 2021-22 season; compared to 2018-19 creel results, Vilas County averages, and Ceded Territory averages.

Month	Number of Angler Party Interviews	Total Angler Hours	Total Angler Hours/Acre	2018-19 Total Angler Hours/Acre	Vilas County Average Hours/Acre	Ceded Territory Average Hours/Acre
May	45	3,500	3.4	2.6	5.2	4.8
June	54	6,077	5.9	2.8	6.7	6.2
July	56	3,986	3.9	3.0	7.1	6.6
August	42	4,372	4.2	3.2	6.2	5.2
September	49	3,772	3.7	2.6	4.1	3.2
October	79	2,270	2.2	1.7	1.9	1.4
December	2	340	0.3	0.4	0.6	1.1
January	11	453	0.4	0.3	0.9	1.7
February	17	1,233	1.2	1.8	1.0	1.6
March	12	483	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.2
Summer Total	325	23,977	23.2	15.9	31.3	27.3
Winter Total	42	2,509	2.4	2.4	2.7	4.6
Grand Total	367	26,486	25.6	18.4	33.8	31.5

Note: Summer is May-October; Winter is December-March

Number of Angler Party Interviews is the number of groups of anglers interviewed by the creel clerk. A party is considered the members of a group who fish together in the same boat, ice shanty or from shore. The clerk fills out one interview form for each group of anglers. The number of individual anglers actually contacted by the clerk is usually much greater than the number of groups listed in this table since most groups consist of more than one angler.

Total Angler Hours is the estimated total number of hours that anglers spent fishing on Plum Lake during each month surveyed.

Total Angler Hours/Acre is the total angler hours divided by the area of the lake in acres. This is useful in order to compare effort on Plum Lake to other lakes.

2018-19 Total Angler Hours/Acre is the total angler hours divided by the area of the lake in acres. This is from the previous creel survey that took place on Plum Lake.

County Average Hours/Acre is the average angler effort in hours per acre for county lakes that have been surveyed since 1990. This value is useful for fishing pressure comparisons with other waters.

Ceded Territory Average Hours/Acre is the average angler effort in hours per acre for inland lakes in the Ceded Territory that have been surveyed since 1990. This value can be used to compare Plum Lake to other lakes in northern Wisconsin.

Table 2. Comparison of creel survey synopses, Plum Lake, 2021-22 and 2018-19 fishing seasons.

CREEL YEAR: 2021-22

SPECIES	DIRECTED EFFORT (Hours)	PERCENT OF TOTAL	TOTAL CATCH	SPECIFIC CATCH RATE (Hrs/Fish)	TOTAL HARVEST	SPECIFIC HARVEST RATE (Hrs/Fish)	MEAN LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH
Walleye	8,095	16.3%	824	10.2	89	91.3	15.2
Northern Pike	7,103	14.3%	2,031	6.5	152	54.0	22.4
Muskellunge	3,109	6.3%	30	103.6	0	*	**
Smallmouth Bass	10,400	20.9%	4,139	2.7	13	*	19.1
Largemouth Bass	4,408	8.9%	1,170	6.1	5	*	17.0
Yellow Perch	4,712	9.5%	1,112	4.9	79	64.2	8.2
Bluegill	5,687	11.5%	5,936	1.0	1,973	2.9	7.8
Black Crappie	4,318	8.7%	1,255	3.4	779	5.5	10.6
Pumpkinseed	1,827	3.7%	114	17.5	36	51.0	7.7
Rock Bass	0	0.0%	249	*	15	*	9.5

CREEL YEAR: 2018-19

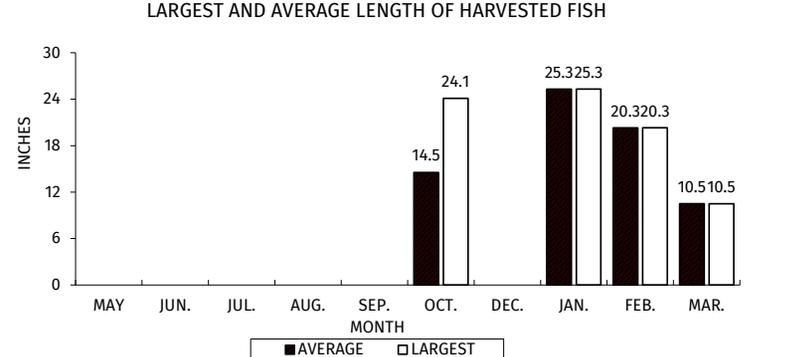
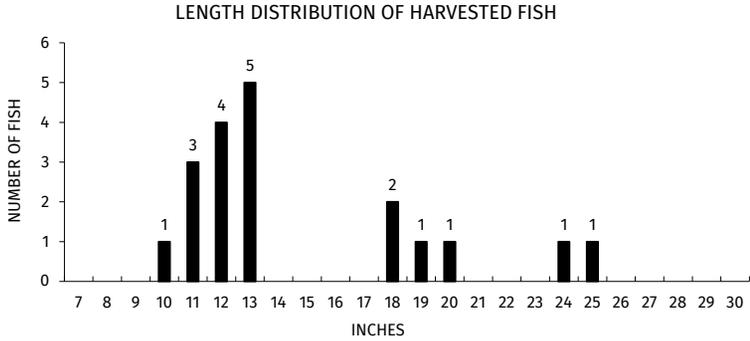
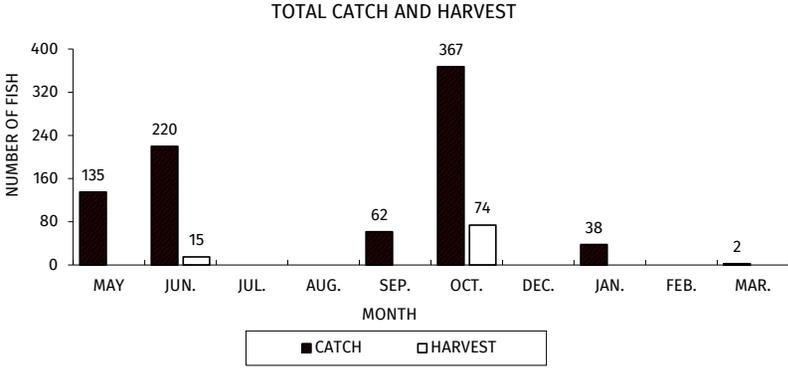
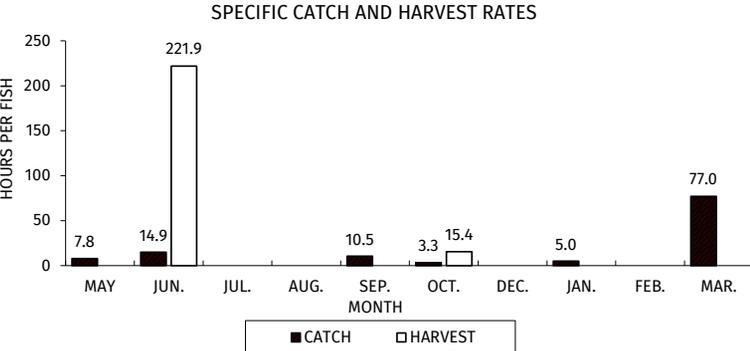
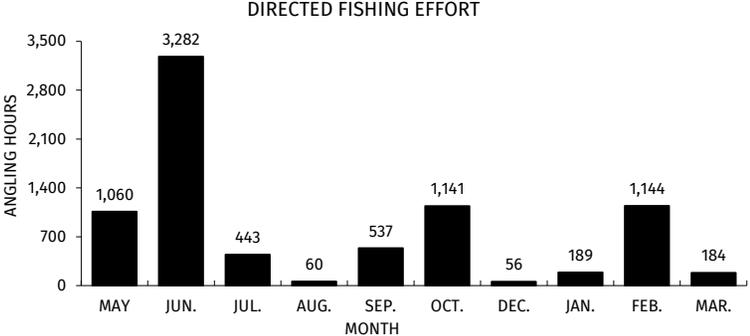
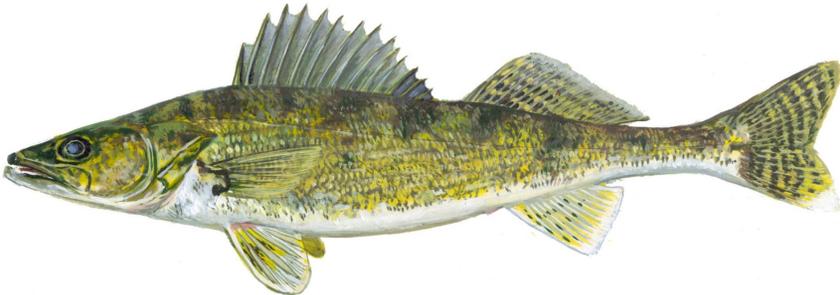
SPECIES	DIRECTED EFFORT (Hours)	PERCENT OF TOTAL	TOTAL CATCH	SPECIFIC CATCH RATE (Hrs/Fish)	TOTAL HARVEST	SPECIFIC HARVEST RATE (Hrs/Fish)	MEAN LENGTH OF HARVESTED FISH
Walleye	6,240	16.2%	717	10.0	67	105.3	17.7
Northern Pike	5,823	15.1%	5,200	1.7	628	11.1	20.5
Muskellunge	3,025	7.8%	33	102.0	0	*	**
Smallmouth Bass	6,562	17.0%	1,773	4.1	23	434.8	19.4
Largemouth Bass	2,433	6.3%	645	7.0	4	666.7	18.2
Yellow Perch	5,306	13.8%	3,743	1.5	622	8.6	8.6
Bluegill	5,019	13.0%	5,812	0.9	1,039	4.8	7.7
Black Crappie	3,857	10.0%	198	24.9	70	67.6	10.4
Pumpkinseed	264	0.7%	352	1.2	102	3.0	7.0
Rock Bass	21	0.1%	87	1.4	4	5.5	9.4

Note: If a species is not shown in a table, no data was collected by the creel clerks for that species.

* Indicates that no fish of this species were caught or harvested (depending on the column) by anglers who specifically targeted this species.

** Indicates that no fish were measured by the creel clerks for this species.

WALLEYE



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Figure 1. Walleye fishing effort, catch, harvest and length distribution, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.

NORTHERN PIKE

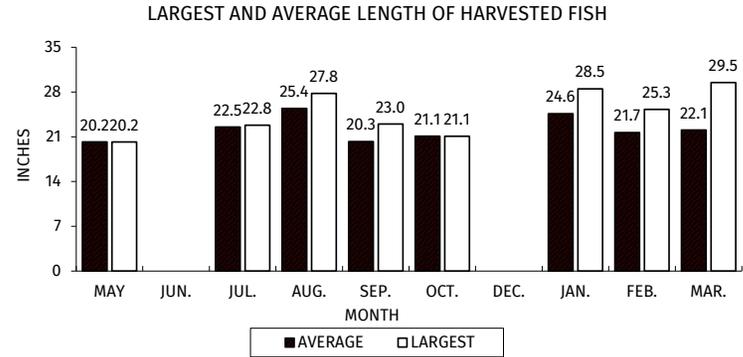
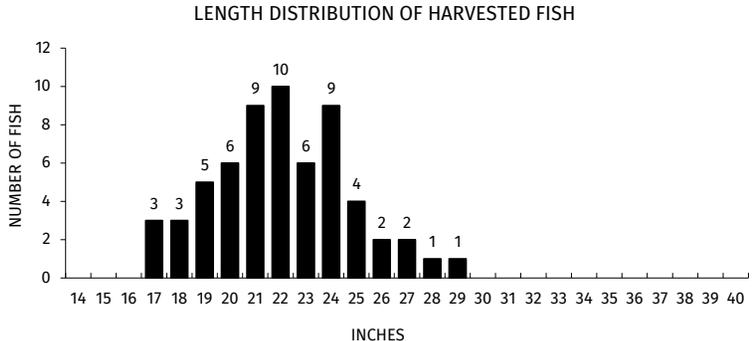
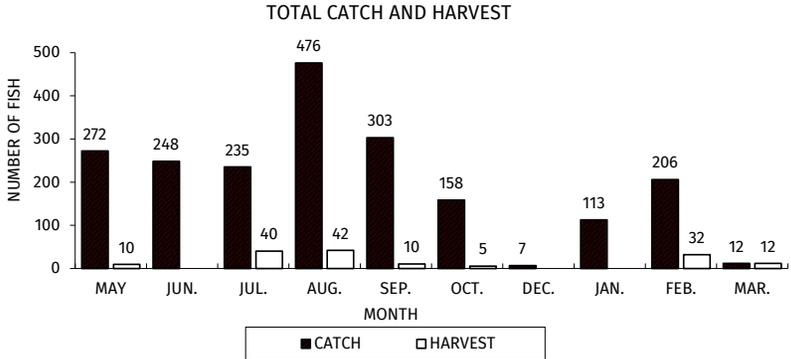
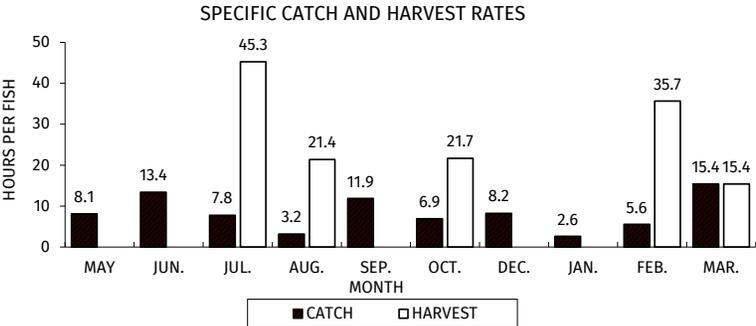
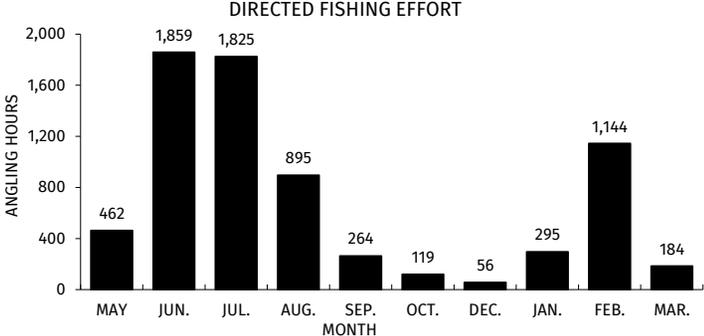
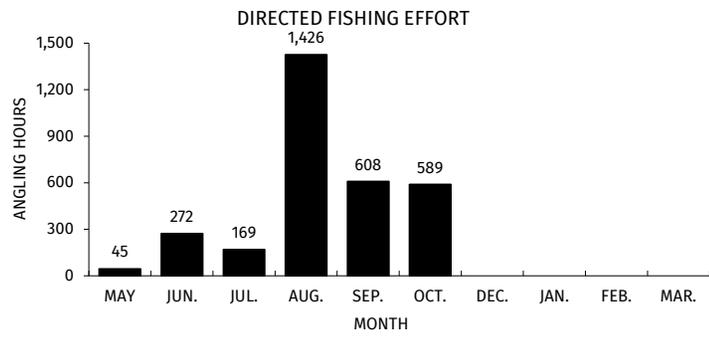


Figure 2. Northern Pike fishing effort, catch, harvest and length distribution, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.



MUSKELLUNGE

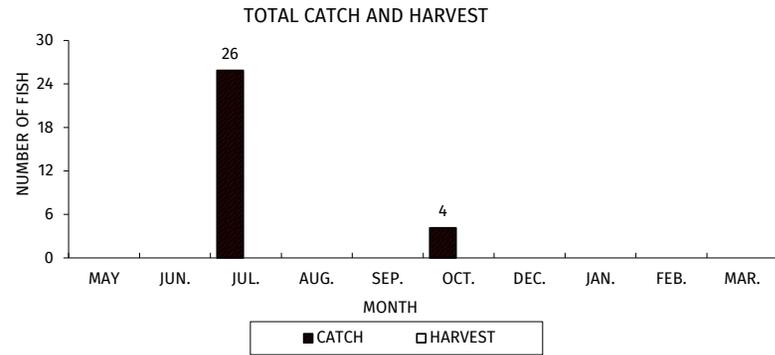
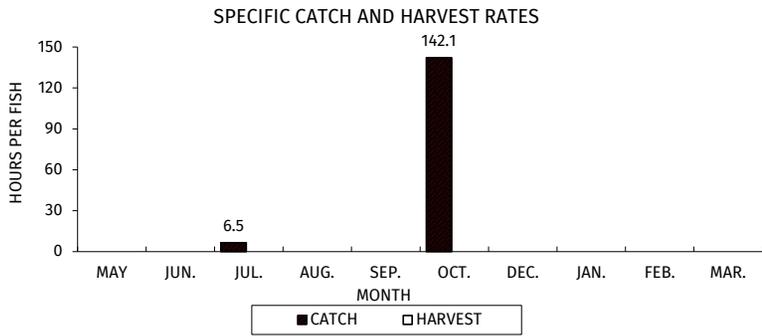


Figure 3. Muskellunge fishing effort, catch and harvest, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.

SMALLMOUTH BASS

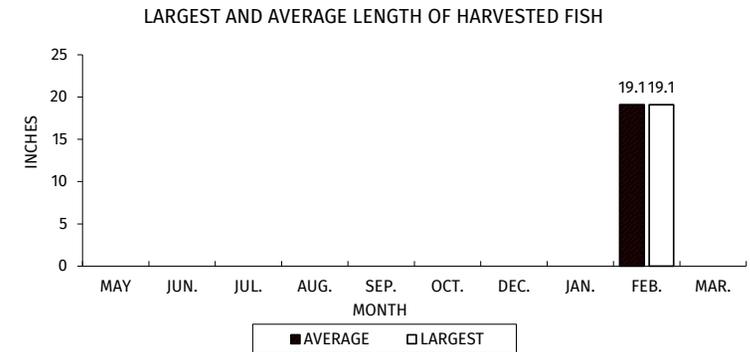
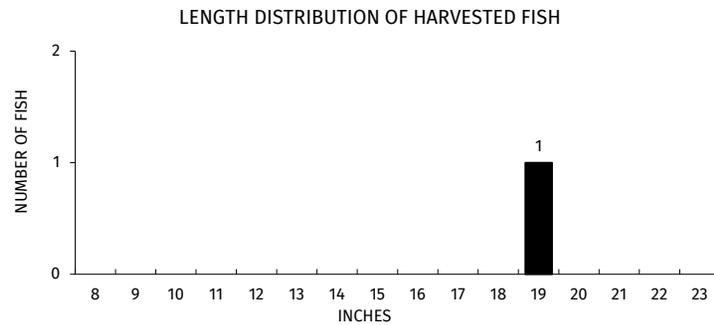
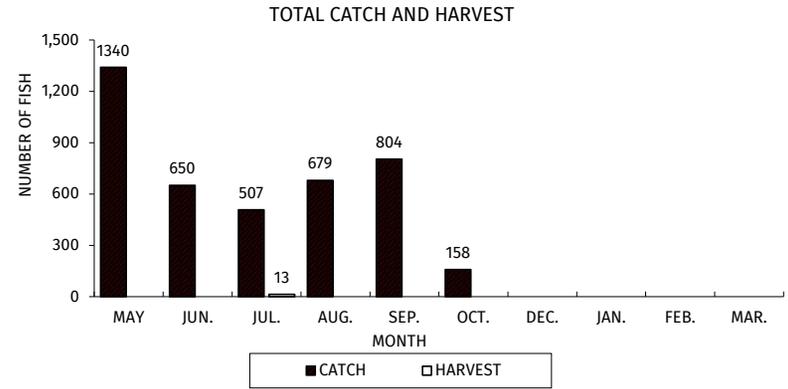
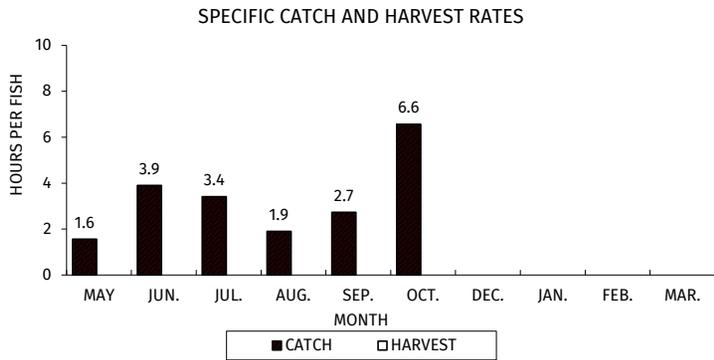
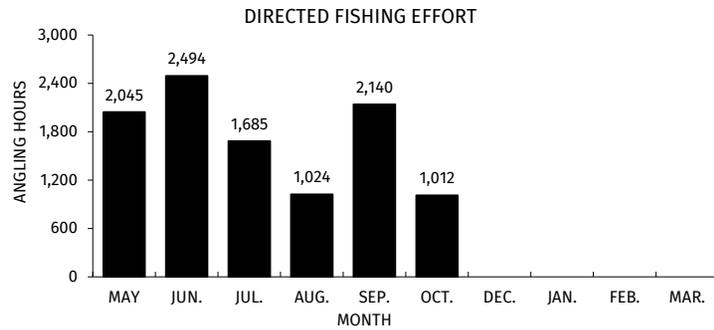


Figure 4. Smallmouth Bass fishing effort, catch, harvest and length distribution, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

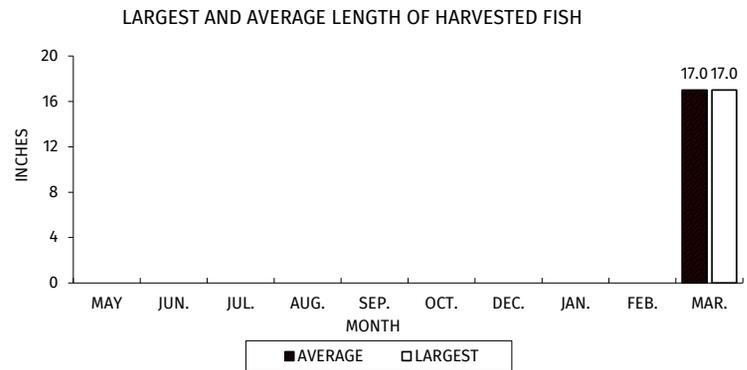
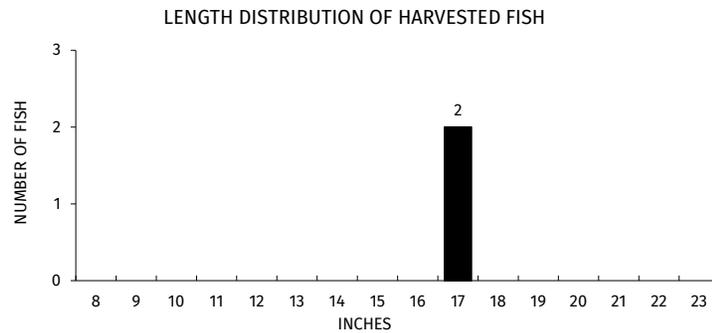
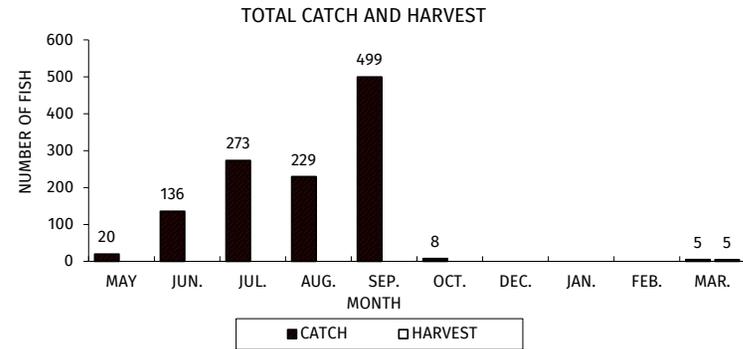
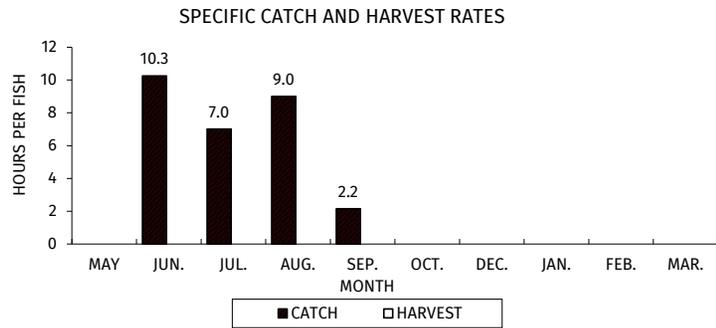
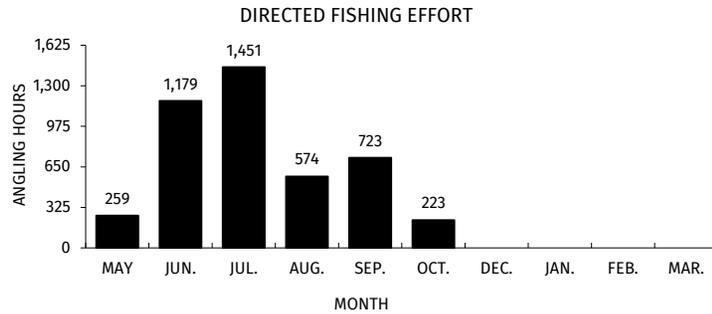


Figure 5. Largemouth Bass fishing effort, catch, harvest and length distribution, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.

YELLOW PERCH

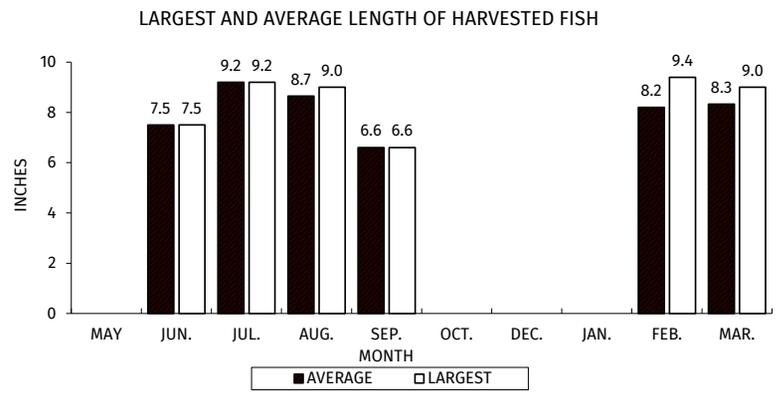
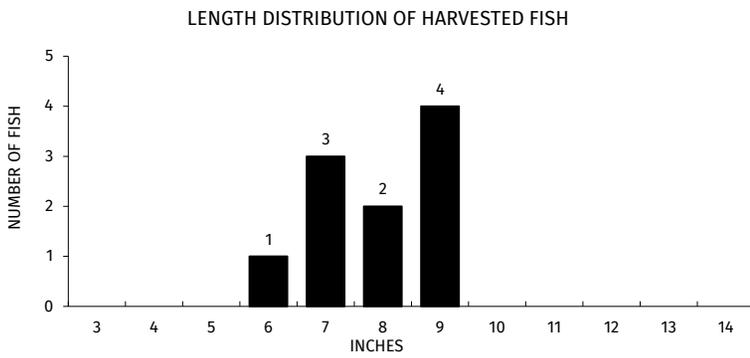
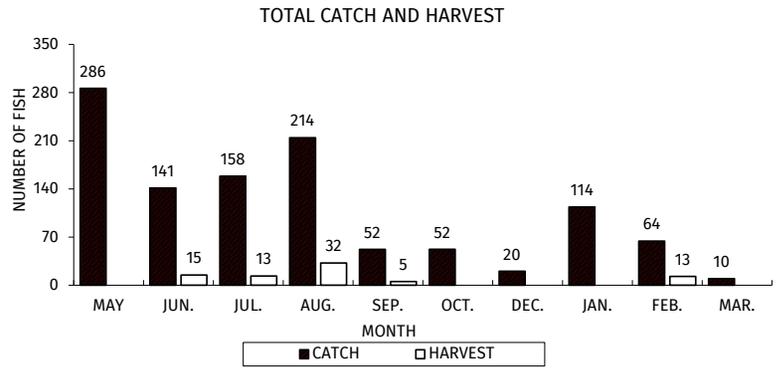
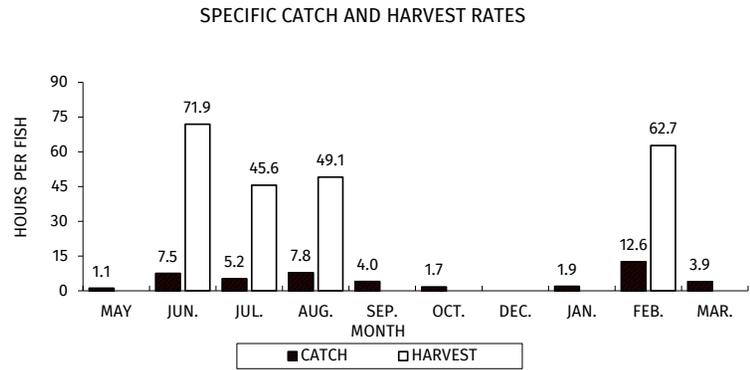
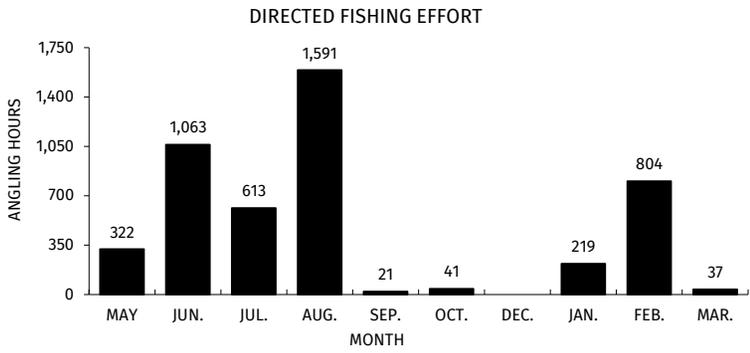


Figure 6. Yellow Perch fishing effort, catch, harvest and length distribution, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.

BLUEGILL

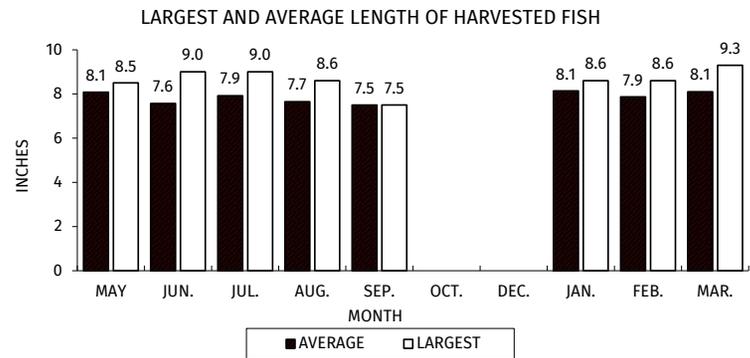
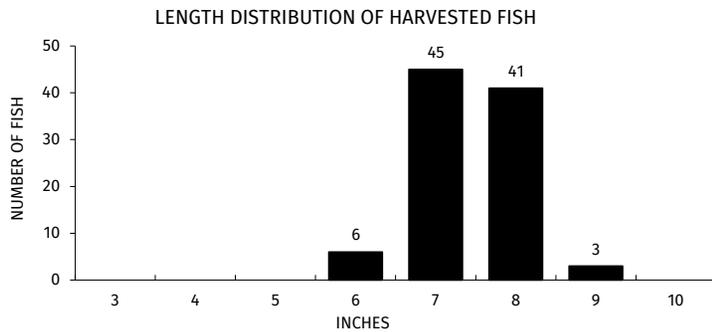
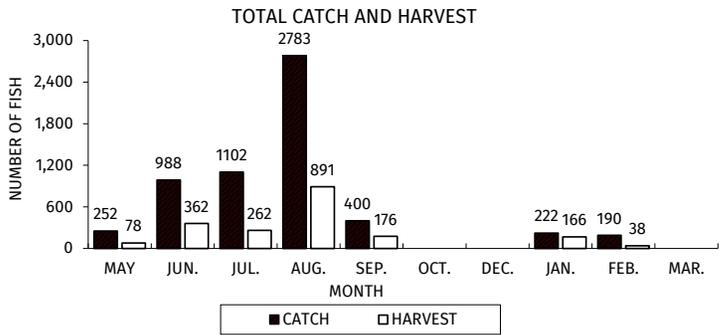
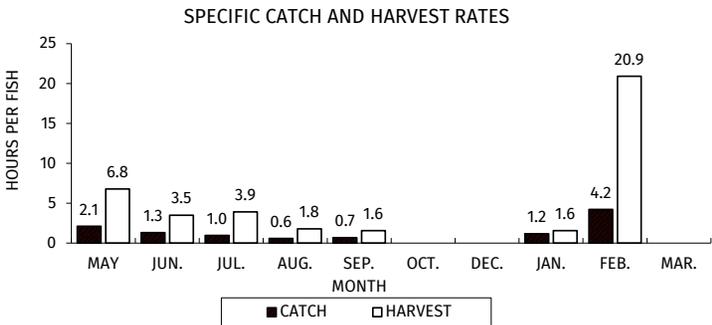


Figure 7. Bluegill fishing effort, catch, harvest and length distribution, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.

BLACK CRAPPIE

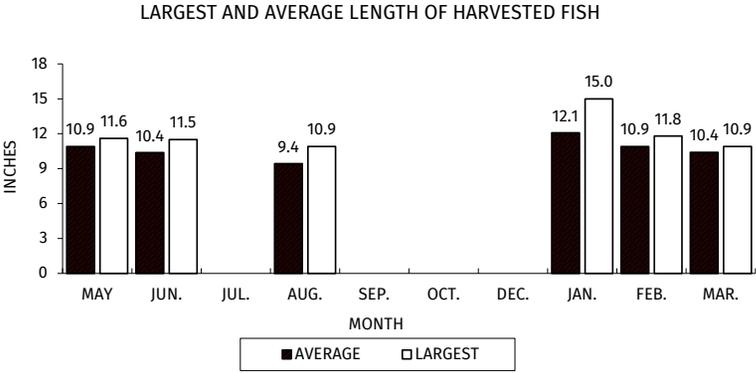
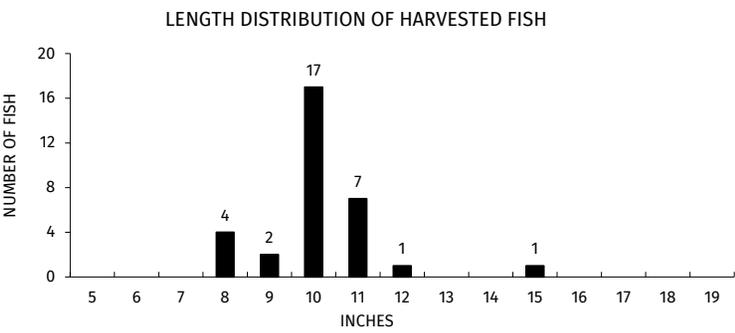
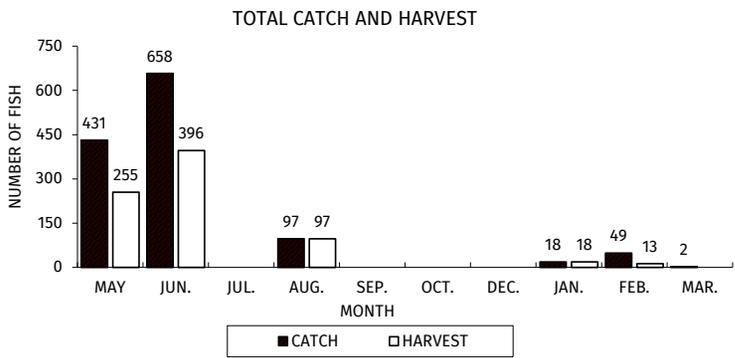
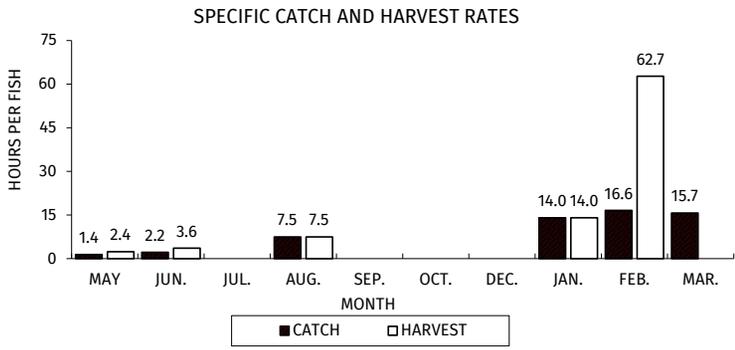
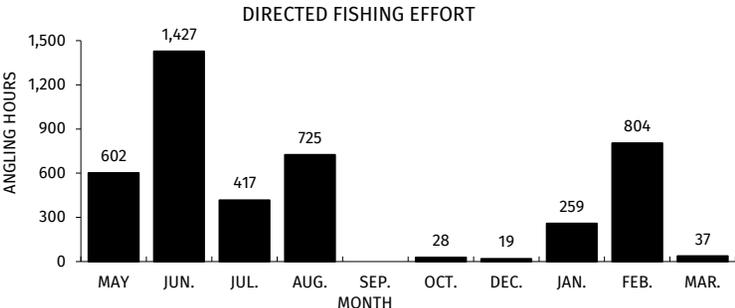
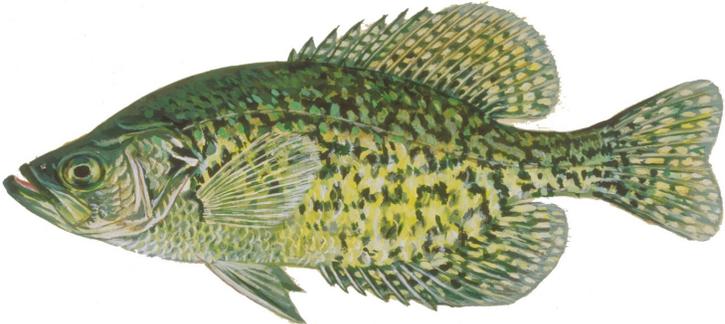


Figure 8. Black Crappie fishing effort, catch, harvest and length distribution, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.

PUMPKINSEED

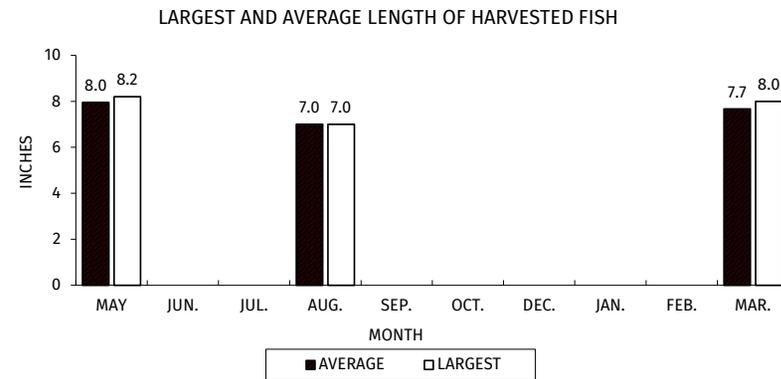
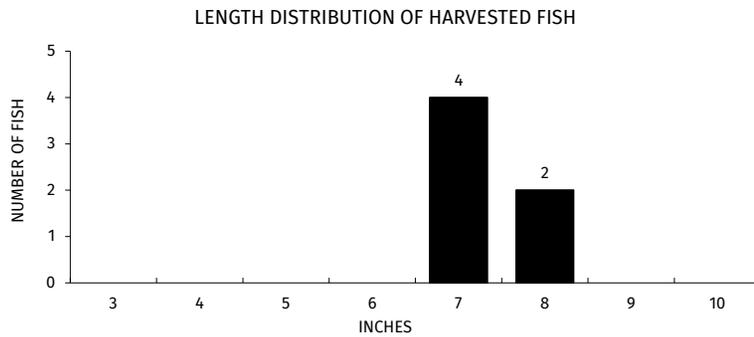
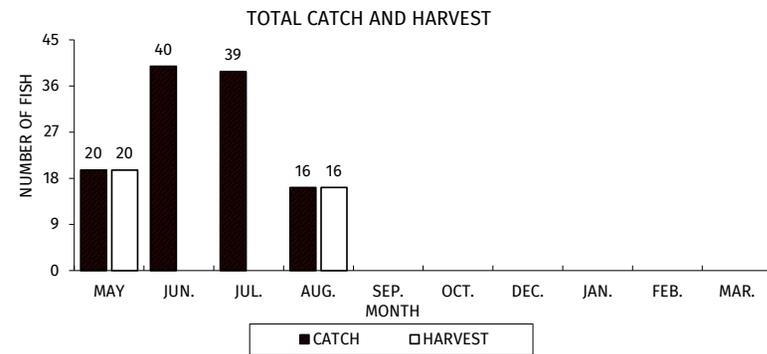
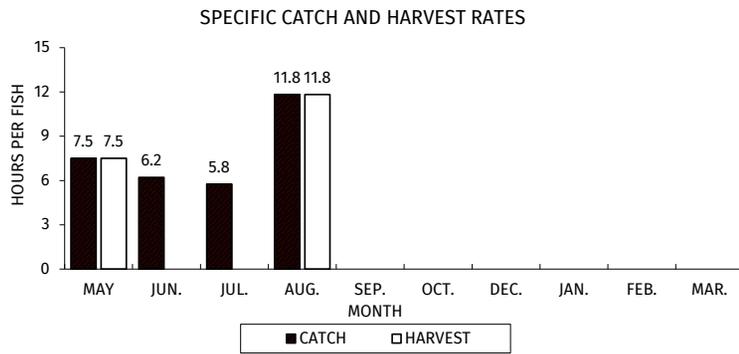
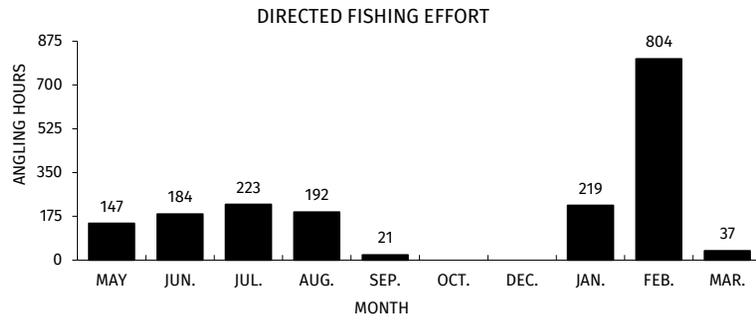
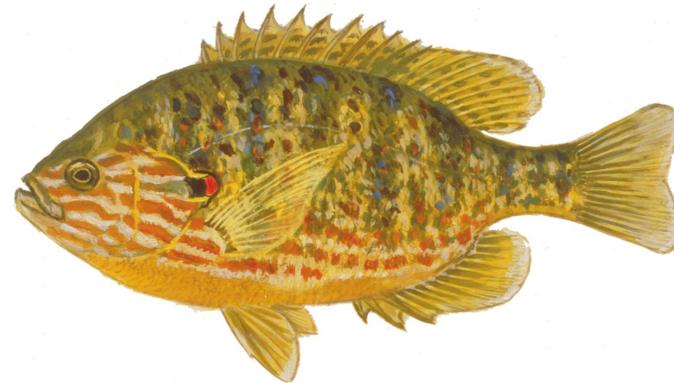


Figure 9. Pumpkinseed fishing effort, catch, harvest and length distribution, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.

ROCK BASS

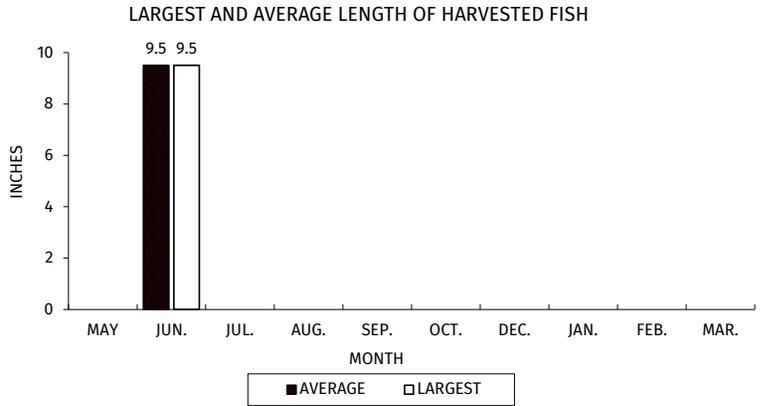
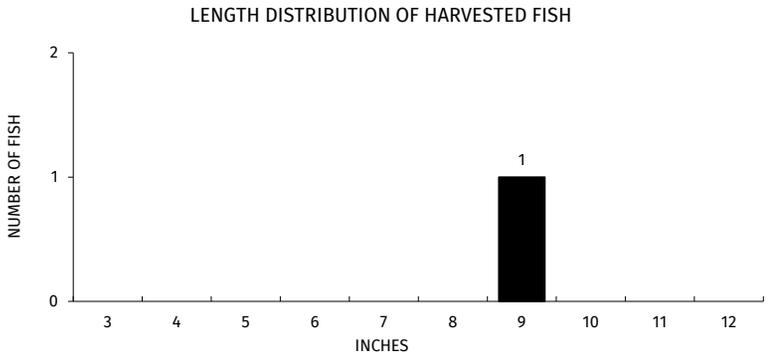
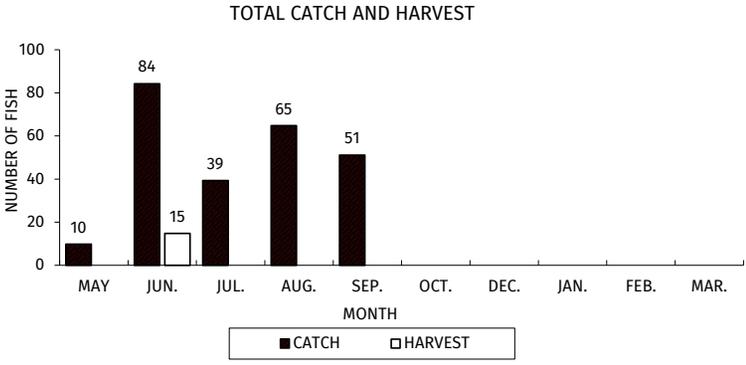


Figure 10. Rock Bass fishing catch, harvest and length distribution, Plum Lake, during 2021-22.