



Rivanna Reservoir 2026



NOTICE TO USERS: THE RIVANNA WATER AND SEWER AUTHORITY HAS PERMINATELY CLOSED THE BOAT RAMP AND LAKE ACCESS ON RT. 659, (OFF OF RIO ROAD) TO EXPAND THE PUMP STATION AT THE WATER PLANT. UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE NO PLANS TO REPLACE THE ACCESS AT THE LOCATION, BUT ALBEMARLE COUNTY AND DWR CONTINUE TO LOOK FOR AVENUES TO CREATE MORE ACCESS AT THIS RESERVOIR.

Located in Albemarle County, the Rivanna Reservoir is a 450-acre water supply impoundment owned and managed by the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority. The reservoir contains self-sustaining populations of Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, Black Crappie, and Channel Catfish. The lake has traditionally provided excellent Largemouth Bass and panfish fisheries. In the spring of 2025, the fish community of the Rivanna Reservoir was sampled by boat electrofishing and trapnet gear. This report summarizes the results of these surveys and what anglers can expect to catch in the Rivanna Reservoir.

The reservoir's fish community is very diverse with sixteen fish species collected in the 2025 surveys (Table 1). Black Crappie and Largemouth Bass were by far the most abundant species collected in the electrofishing survey, while Black Crappie and Bluegill were the most abundant in trapnets (Table 1). Rivanna Reservoir continues to provide an exceptional Largemouth Bass fishery for central Virginia. Bass catch rates were high with observed rates 20% higher than the long-term average of 103 fish/hour for the lake. The bass population contains good portions of juvenile and adult fish (Figure 1), with exceptional numbers of bass in the 10-to-20-inch range. The reservoir has good trophy potential for Largemouth Bass due to the diversity and abundance of forage and limited fishing pressure. This potential was evident by our collection of eight bass measuring over 20 inches. The largest bass collected in the 2025 survey measured nearly 24 inches and weighed approximately 8.2 pounds. The most productive areas for bass were the upper end of the reservoir around the flats, points, and woody structure and in the lower end of the lake (below the Rt. 743 Bridge) around the emergent water willow.

Bluegill and Redear catch rates were slightly up or near the average of previous surveys (Table 1). The catch of both species seems stable and slight changes are due to sampling variability and not changes in the population size. The bulk of Bluegill and Redear collected were small (< 8 inches); only a few Bluegill and Redear Sunfish over 8 inches were collected (Figure 2). The 2025 survey, along with previous electrofishing surveys and angler reports, indicates that there are some larger Bluegill and Redear (up to 12 inches) in the reservoir, especially in the upper end of the reservoir during the spring (April-May). Anglers determined to catch quality sunfish should concentrate their efforts on big Redear during the spring and early summer. The best place to fish for the big Redear is in the upper lake around the sandy flats that these fish frequent during spawning.

Trapnet catch rates for crappie were slightly low, but electrofishing catches were extremely high indicating sampling variability with the gears due to weather conditions. The majority (96%) of the crappie catch was composed of Black Crappie. The majority of crappie collected were less than the preferred angler size of 10 inches, with greater than 76% of the crappie

collected in the 7-9 inch range (Figure 3). The lack of preferred-sized fish is not due to low survival (annual survival near 82%) with crappie up to age-14 collected in 2025 samples (Figure 3). The lack of larger crappie is due to overpopulation and stunting. On average, crappie growth slows at age-5 when the fish approach 9 inches, and crappie rarely grow in excess of 10 inches (Figure 4). The crappie population needs considerable angler harvest of fish in the 7–9-inch range to increase average growth. A small number of crappie over 12 inches (up to 15 inches) were collected in the 2025 surveys, but these larger fish are rare, and anglers should expect to primarily catch fish in the 7-to-9-inch range.

Anglers looking for an excellent bass lake that is in the Charlottesville area should visit the Rivanna Reservoir. The lake offers good numbers of catfish and smaller panfish for anglers to enjoy. One problem is that the access to the reservoir is limited and located off Route 676 on the Ivy Creek arm of the reservoir. Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority has closed the concrete boat ramp on Rt. 659 (off of Rt. 631, aka Rio Road) to expand the water pump station. At this time, there are no plans to develop access to replace the one on Rt 659. The Ivy Creek Natural Area off Earlysville Road has well defined trails nearby for bank anglers and wildlife watchers. The Department of Wildlife Resources and Albemarle County continue to look for opportunities to improve and develop boat access at this lake. Gas powered motors are prohibited in the reservoir, and anglers should make sure they have a good trolling motor and a well charged batteries to get around the large reservoir.

For more information on the Rivanna Reservoir, please contact:

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Table 1. Species account and catch rates for fish collected throughout Rivanna Reservoir in 2025.

| Species | Electrofishing | | | Trapnets | | |
|-----------------|------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| | Number Collected | Catch Rate (fish/hour electrofishing) | Percentage of Catch | Number Collected | Catch Rate (fish/net-night) | Percentage of Catch |
| American Eel | None Collected | | | 1 | 0.1 | <1 |
| Black Crappie | 149 | 143 | 31 | 112 | 5.6 | 44 |
| Bluegill | 92 | 88 | 19 | 73 | 3.7 | 29 |
| Channel Catfish | None Collected | | | 1 | 0.1 | <1 |
| Golden Shiner | 1 | 1 | <1 | None Collected | | |
| Green Sunfish | 1 | 1 | <1 | 1 | 0.1 | <1 |
| Gizzard Shad | 61 | 58 | 13 | 8 | 0.4 | 3 |
| Largemouth Bass | 128 | 123 | 27 | 1 | 0.1 | <1 |
| Redear Sunfish | 35 | 34 | 7 | 27 | 1.4 | 11 |
| Rock Bass | None Collected | | | 1 | 0.1 | <1 |
| Walleye | None Collected | | | 1 | 0.1 | <1 |
| Warmouth | 3 | 2.9 | 1 | None Collected | | |
| White Catfish | None Collected | | | 2 | 0.1 | 1 |
| White Crappie | 3 | 2.9 | 1 | 14 | 0.7 | 6 |
| White Sucker | 7 | 7 | 2 | None Collected | | |
| Yellow Bullhead | None Collected | | | 3 | 0.2 | 1 |

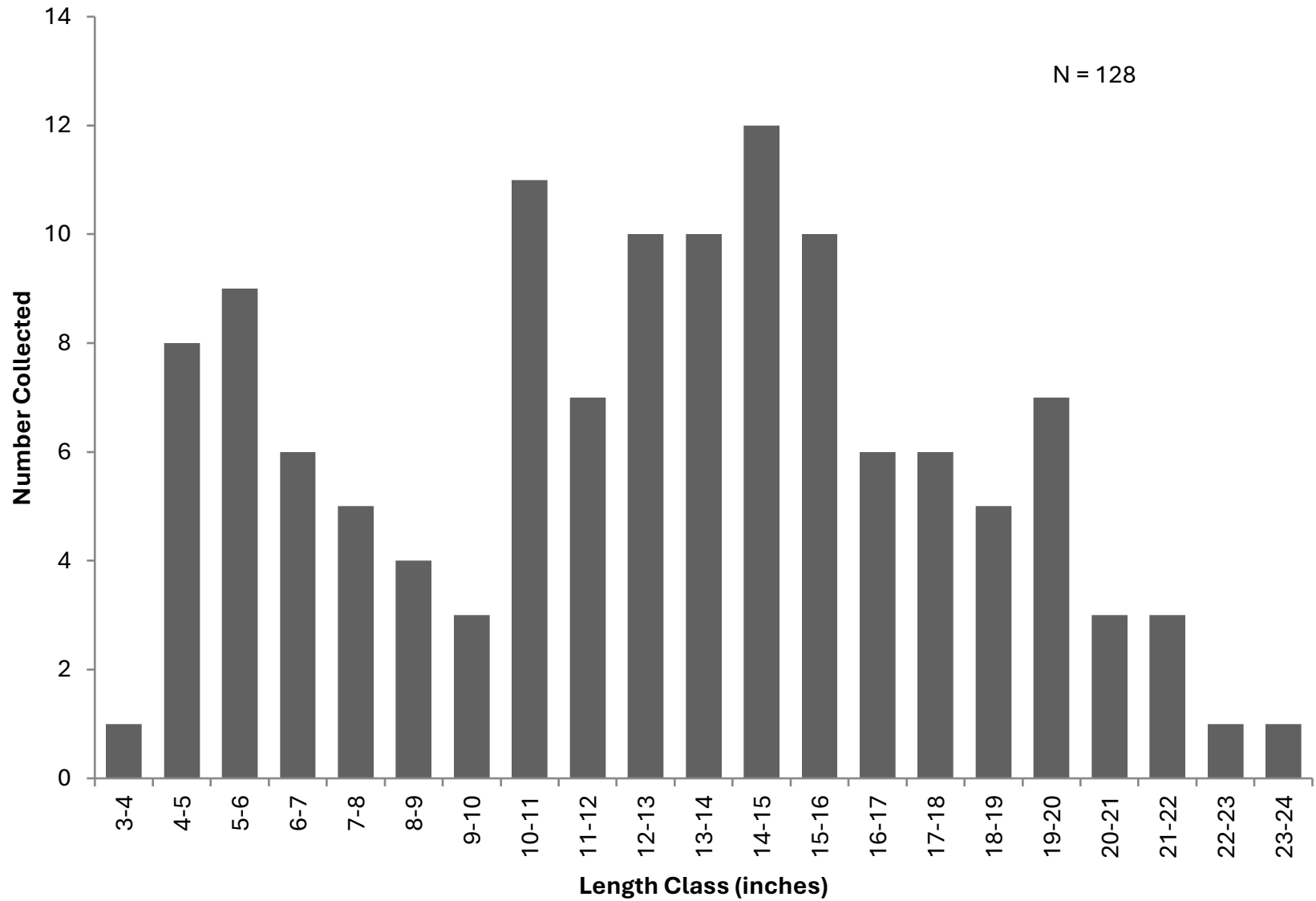


Figure 1. Length distribution of Largemouth Bass collected with electrofishing gear throughout Rivanna Reservoir in 2025.

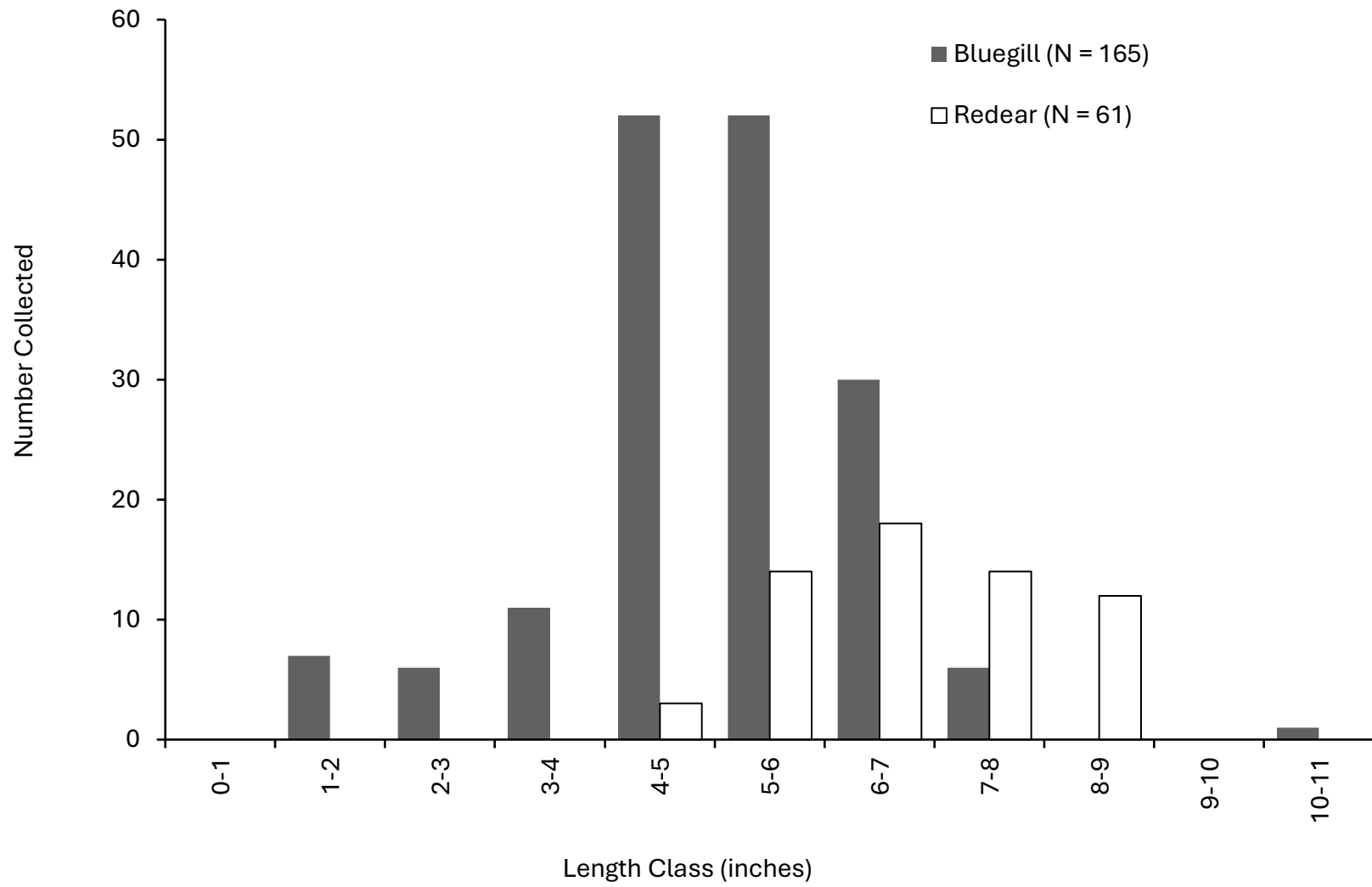


Figure 2. Length distribution of Bluegill and Redear sunfish collected throughout Rivanna Reservoir in 2025.

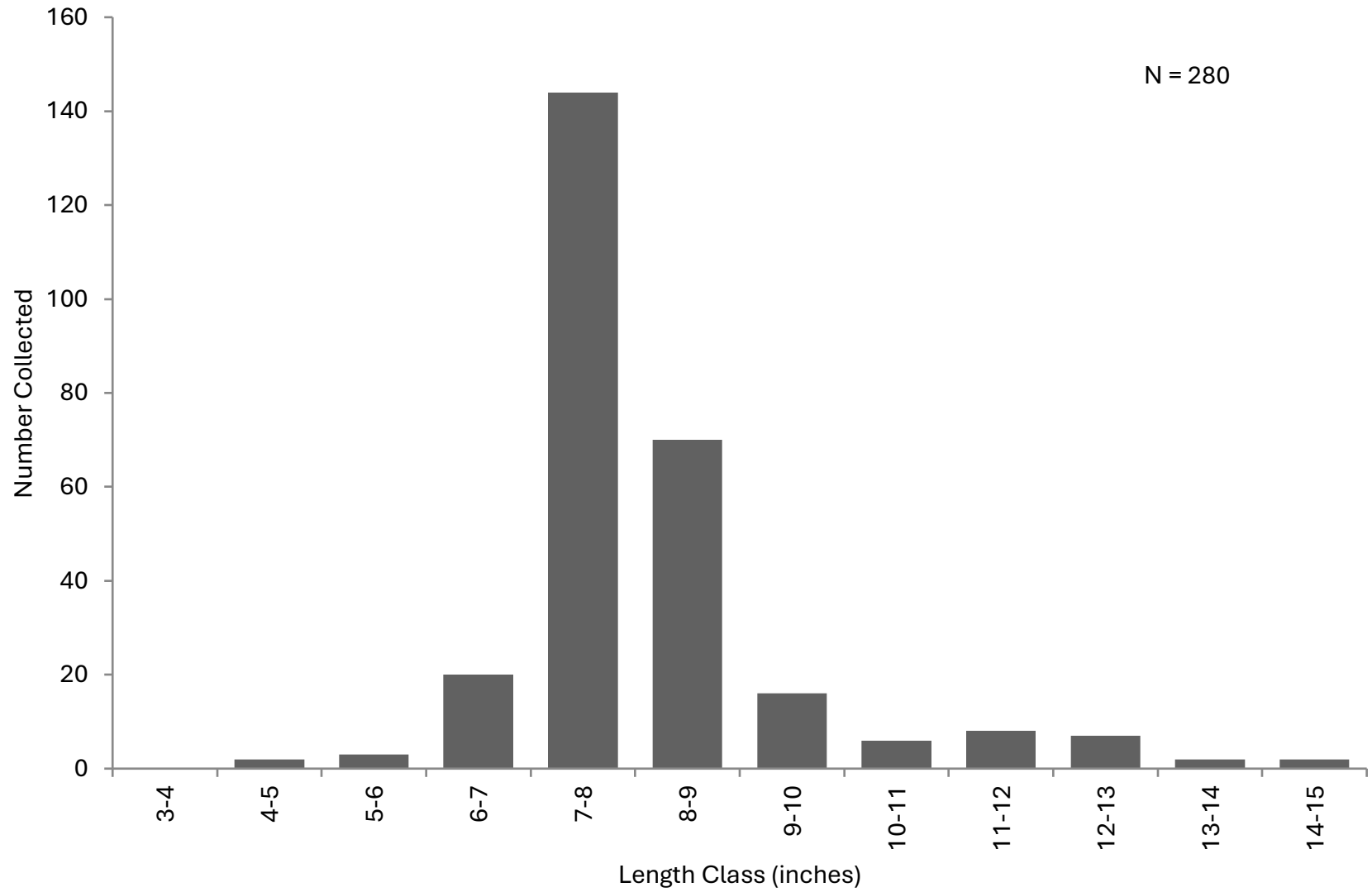


Figure 3. Length distribution of Black and White crappie collected throughout Rivanna Reservoir in 2025.

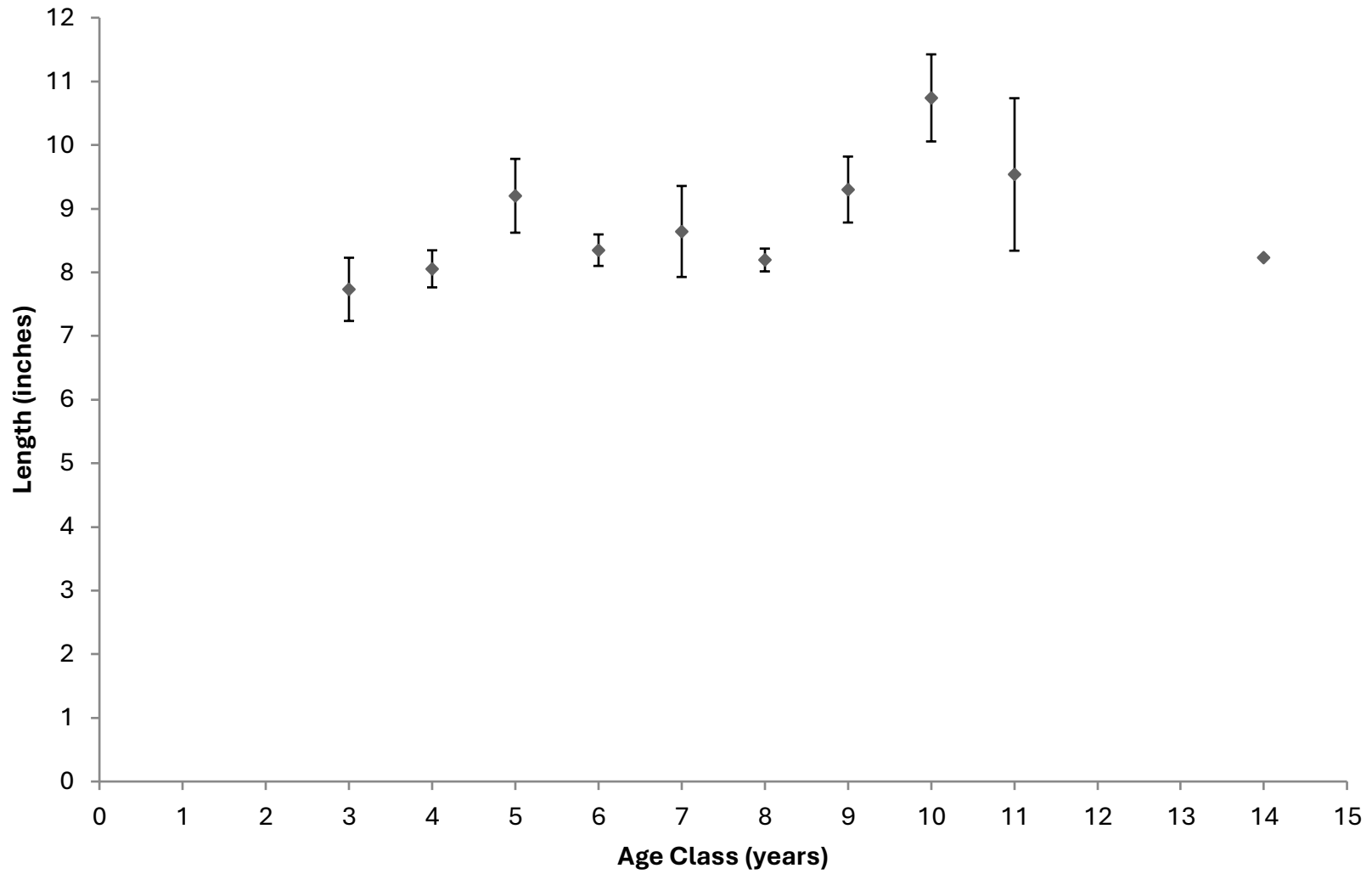


Figure 4. Average length-at-age of crappie (black and white combined) collected throughout Rivanna Reservoir in 2025. Error bars indicate standard error.