



White Bass Management and Fishing in Pennsylvania

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Goal: Maintain or create robust sport fisheries through preservation and enhancement of essential habitats and through harvest management of wild populations.

White Bass occur and are indigenous to rivers, streams, and lakes of the Ohio River drainage and the Lake Erie drainage. The Ohio River drainage includes the Ohio River, Allegheny River, and Monongahela River drainages. White bass occur in reservoir and lake (lentic) habitats as well as in river (lotic) habitats. White bass have not been encountered outside of their native range in Pennsylvania. White bass have not been observed in the Susquehanna River, Delaware River or Potomac River drainages. All lake, reservoir and river populations in western Pennsylvania are self-sustaining. Predominant reservoir populations occur in the Allegheny Reservoir, Pymatuning Lake, Conneaut Lake, and Lake Erie. Notable river populations occur in Pennsylvania's Three Rivers (Ohio, Allegheny and Monongahela rivers).

White bass typically spawn in late spring in western Pennsylvania waters. In lakes and reservoirs spawning typically takes place near or within the riverine portion of these lentic systems. In all waters eggs are fertilized within the water column, then sink to the bottom, hatching occurs in about two days. Survival of each year class varies from year to year sometimes in dramatic fashion. Both environmental features such as flow and temperature, and biological features such as prey density, have been suspected to influence year class survival. Since white bass do not spawn in the near shore zone, but rather in mid-water locations, year classes are typically less influenced by water level fluctuations, which influence year class abundance of many near-shore spawning river species.

Sport harvest limits and stocking represent the most widely applied techniques used by fishery biologists in Pennsylvania to sustain and enhance white bass sport fisheries. White bass stocking occurs very infrequently, and only to bolster weak natural populations. Annual stocking does not take place to maintain white bass populations in Pennsylvania.

With respect to harvest management, inland regulations accommodate harvest of 50 panfish, combined species, which includes white bass. No minimum size limit or seasonal restrictions apply. White bass are a prolific species but show considerable variation in abundance. Most variation in abundance is attributed to variation in production of young versus variation associated with angler harvest. Biologists

regularly sample fish populations to measure their density, size structure, and age structure which provides information pertaining to year class abundance. Findings from these evaluations accommodate development of management plans to maintain or enhance density and size structure of white bass populations. In association with those evaluations growth of white bass is examined by measuring length, weight, and taking a scale sample to determine age. In Pennsylvania, a 9 inch white bass is approximately 1.7 years old (Fig. 1) and weighs 0.3 pounds, when white bass are 12 inches in length they are approximately 3 years old and weigh approximately 0.8 pounds. We have tabulated average ages and weights for a variety of lengths of white bass in Pennsylvania (Table 1). Anglers find these tables useful in approximating the weight and age of their catch. Growth of white bass, recruitment of young white bass to the population and loss of older white bass are important considerations in developing management plans.

Figure 1. Average length of white bass (March –June), striped bass (March-June), white x striped bass (March-June), and white perch (March – October) collected by Fisheries Biologists in assessment gear in Pennsylvania.

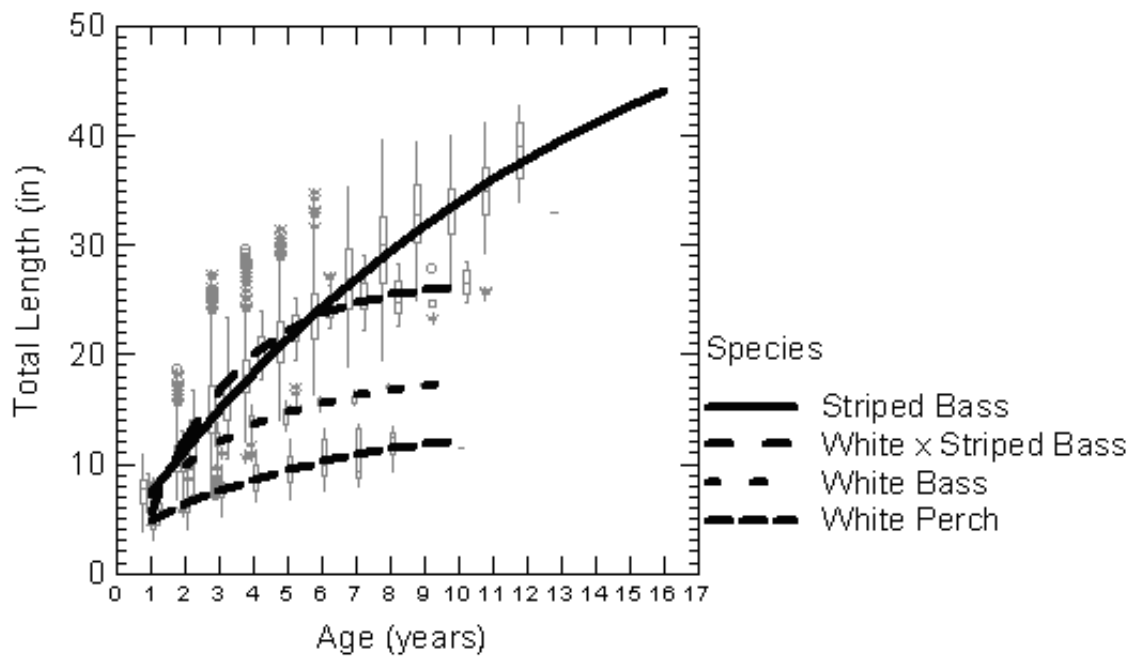


Table 1. Average weight and average age of white bass at a given length (March-June).

Inches	Pounds	Years	Inches	Pounds	Years	Inches	Pounds	Years
4	0.1	0.1	9.5	0.4	1.8	15	1.7	5.3
4.5	0.1	0.3	10	0.4	2.1	15.5	1.7	5.3
5	0.1	0.4	10.5	0.5	2.3	16		
5.5	0.1	0.5	11	0.6	2.5	16.5	1.8	5.8
6	0.1	0.7	11.5	0.7	2.7	17	2.0	6.5
6.5	0.1	0.8	12	0.8	3.0	17.5	2.7	7.
7	0.1	1.0	12.5	0.9	3.3	18	3.0	13.2
7.5	0.2	1.1	13	1.0	3.6	18.5	3.2	> 13.2
8	0.2	1.3	13.5	1.2	4.0	19	3.5	> 13.2
8.5	0.3	1.5	14	1.3	4.3	19.5	3.8	> 13.2

9	0.3	1.7	14.5	1.5	4.8	20	4.2	> 13.2
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Tabulating catch and harvest by anglers from various waterways is also useful in developing management plans. Information derived from creel surveys frequently yields information of interest to anglers since seasonal peaks in catch occur for most species. White bass can be caught most any time of year, generally though, highest catch per hour occurs in spring in large reservoirs and rivers (Fig. 2 and 3). With fishing destinations identified from our GIS maps and information describing good times to catch white bass, anglers need only select an effective bait or lure. Most anglers catch white bass casting from shore or more frequently drifting a boat over deeper water. A jig tipped with a minnow, a small spinner bait, or a weighted spoon are all effective. Anglers should keep in mind that white bass are considered sight feeders, so visibility should play a role in lure selection. White bass are powerful fighters for their size and popular among a growing segment of Pennsylvania anglers.

Figure 2. Average catch per angler hour of white bass from large size Pennsylvania reservoirs.

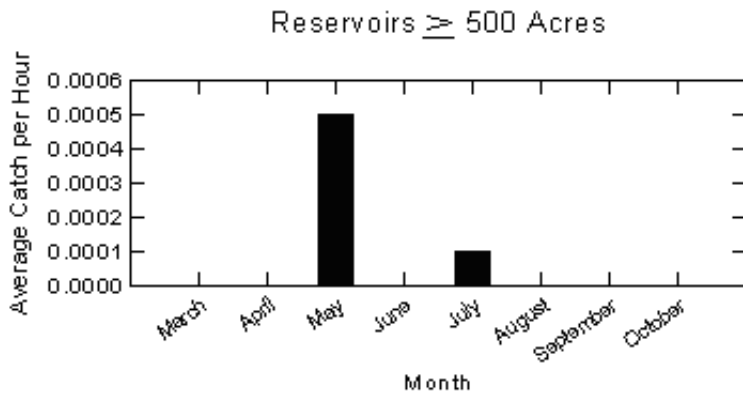


Figure 3. Average catch per angler hour of white bass from Pennsylvania rivers.

