

Fish Monitoring on Lake Keowee

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If you're ever on Lake Keowee and see an odd-looking silver boat with boom arms extending out and two people holding long-handled nets on the front, do not worry. These fisheries' biologists and technicians from the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) are sampling fish populations



to see how abundant and healthy the fish are. They are electrofishing, that is to say a boat-mounted generator carefully applies electricity to the water, which stuns fish causing them to float to the surface where they are netted and placed in a live well. Once in a live well the fish revive quickly, allowing SCDNR biologists and technicians to weigh, measure, and return the fish to the lake unharmed. If the thought of a boat driving around Lake Keowee, applying electricity to the water makes you nervous, you don't need to be. The electricity only extends a short distance from the boat and we are always careful to watch for anyone in the water, in a kayak, on a paddleboard, or just fishing. We always keep our distance from these people.

We target the native Largemouth Bass and Black Crappie along with introduced Alabama Bass (also known as Spotted Bass). This focus allows us to see how healthy our native sportfish are, and how Alabama Bass are impacting the health and population levels of our native species. SCDNR is currently looking at various ways to help

native species compete with Alabama Bass. Annual electrofishing is our biggest tool in monitoring what is happening in the lake and informing us on how well native species are doing.



Sometimes we can't resist netting other species such as this fat Redear Sunfish, another Keowee native. This fish measured just over 12" and was safely released.

When conducting electrofishing surveys, we shock near the shoreline so that electricity can reach the fish. Electrofishing is not effective in deeper water because the electricity simply does not reach deep enough to stun the fish, which allows them to escape. We sample Lake Keowee in the spring, when bass of all sizes and age classes are nearshore. We end up sampling large reaches of the total shoreline to meet our sample goals. This technique gives us an accurate picture as to what is happening in different parts of

the lake and how population levels differ in different parts of the lake. This knowledge allows us to focus other management activities, such as habitat improvement, on areas where they are most likely to be effective. We hope that our efforts result in better managing the sportfish resources in Lake Keowee.

Just like all our actions, we conduct these electrofishing surveys to monitor and improve the natural resources we are so fortunate to have in the Upstate. If you see us out there don't be afraid to say hello after we finish shocking; we might even have a lunker to show you. ❖



Largemouth Bass



Black Crappie



Spotted Bass

