

## Striper Club Supports DWR Programs at SML

As part of the SML Striper Club partnership with Virginia Department of Wildlife Resource (DWR), every fall the club supports Dan Wilson, Fisheries Biologist and the DWR Team in sampling the striper population in Smith Mountain Lake. The team supports 3 samplings that typically take place at the beginning of each month October – December. Gill nets are placed in two locations on points on the Roanoke River in locations where they get a strong sampling of fish. Dan told us that they have used the same locations for 25 years since they produce a good sampling of fish. Two nets each 200 feet long and 8 feet deep are placed at the two locations overnight. The DWR team retrieves the nets early in the morning and meets the SML Striper Club volunteers at the SML state park.

The Striper Club volunteers work with the DWR team to remove the fish from the gill nets and place into tubs for each net. One net had so many fish we needed two tubs. For each Striper a precise measurement of length and weight are taken. Then Dan cuts out the ear bone or otolith bone. There are 6 bones, and he takes the largest pair. The bones are then cleaned and placed into an envelope that is marked to match the fish measurements. The fish's age can be determined by the number of rings on the bone like a tree.

Based on the information collected during rate of growth of the fish can be determined. As you can imagine there are many factors in the growth rate but two of the main factors are food supply (bait fish) and competition (other predators in the lake) for the food supply. Leveraging these samplings and other factors Dan can adjust the stocking rates to ensure the best possible fishery. Many thanks to Dan and the DWR team for their efforts in keeping the stock of stripers healthy in Smith Mountain Lake. The striper club website has a [page dedicated to conservation](#) with more details and links to vides on how this process helps sustain the fishery.

DWR boat used to set and collect gill nets.



Gill nets with fish.



Removing fish from gill nets.



Dan gives us a lesson in how to remove the fish.

There we a few larger fish that did not figure out how to get out of the net.



Tubs of fish ready for measurements.



Team setup for measurements.



Fish length measurement is taken in millimeters.



Weight is measured in grams.



Otolith large bone set is removed.



Otolith sample of an approximately 2 ½ year old striper. Blue circles note rings.



Otolith bone set is cleaned and placed in envelope that is matched to record of measurements.



Volunteers get to take fish to eat.



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