

POND-ering FISHy Subjects

Today Yates Mill Pond is about 20 acres in size. Historically it may have once been as large as 40 acres but sedimentation in the upstream reaches of the pond likely caused its reduction in size. The average depth of the pond is only about 4-1/2 feet, although it's around 10-12 feet deep in the creek channel and 16 feet deep behind the dam. After Hurricane Fran breached the old dam and drained the pond in September 1996, Wake County removed about 40,000 cubic yards of sediment from the pond basin, deepening the pond for mill operations purposes as well as for flood and pollution control. The pond was re-established in March 2000. There was a temporary drawdown in February-May 2014 for mill repair purposes. The pond is part of a nutrient-sensitive, water supply watershed; its upstream drainage area is about 3,300 acres. The waters from the pond flow into Swift Creek at Lake Benson and then into the Neuse River around the town of Smithfield.

		
<p>Bullhead Catfish (this bottom-dwelling fish was locally known as the "yellow-headed pond cat")</p>	<p>Swamp Darter (the cryptic coloring of this small fish gives it a natural camouflage)</p>	<p>Bowfin (this primitive, ray-finned fish can gulp air making it common in swampy areas - beware its sharp bite!)</p>
		
<p>Bluegill (this fish can be distinguished from other sunfish by the dark spot near its pectoral fins)</p>	<p>Green Sunfish (this fish has a larger mouth than most sunfish and a thicker, longer body)</p>	<p>Pumpkinseed Sunfish (this fish is very deep-bodied and laterally compressed, almost disk-like in shape)</p>
		
<p>Black Crappie (this fish is common throughout the U.S. and will eat just about anything)</p>	<p>Golden Shiner (this small fish spends its days close to shore in large schools and feeds at night, so as to avoid being eaten by fish such as crappie and bass)</p>	<p>Largemouth Bass (this typically olive green-colored fish is a fierce top-level predator of freshwater lakes and ponds)</p>