

# Striker Reservoir

## 2019 Fisheries Management Survey Report

PERFORMANCE REPORT

As Required by

FEDERAL AID IN SPORT FISH RESTORATION ACT

TEXAS

FEDERAL AID PROJECT F-221-M-4

INLAND FISHERIES DIVISION MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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## Survey and Management Summary

Fish populations in Striker Reservoir were surveyed in 2019 using electrofishing and in 2020 using gill netting. Historical data are presented with the 2019-2020 data for comparison. This report summarizes the results of the surveys and contains a management plan for the reservoir based on those findings.

**Reservoir Description:** Striker Reservoir is a 1,920-acre impoundment located on Striker Creek in the Angelina River Basin approximately 10 miles southeast of New Summerfield, Texas. Primary water uses are flood control, condenser cooling for a stem-electric generating plant and recreation. Water level has remained within three feet of conservation pool since 2012. Striker Reservoir has moderate productivity. Habitat features consisted of natural shoreline, boat docks, native vegetation and giant salvinia.

**Management History:** Important sport fish include crappie, black bass, White Bass and catfish. Blue Catfish were stocked in 2009 and 2010 and Channel Catfish were stocked in 2018. In 2010, brush piles were introduced to improve angler catch. Giant salvinia was identified on the reservoir in fall 2012. Periodic herbicide treatments were initiated in 2014 and have continued to present. A treatment plan allowing property owner to remove and dispose of giant salvinia mechanically was initiated in 2014. In 2015 a floating barrier was installed in early spring and giant salvinia weevils were released in the fall for further control.

### Fish Community

- **Prey species:** Prey abundance has been historically low. Threadfin Shad were present in the reservoir. Electrofishing catch rate of Gizzard Shad was low and 67% were available as prey to most sport fish. Electrofishing catch of Bluegill was low and all were less than 6 inches long.
- **Catfishes:** Blue and Channel Catfish were present in the reservoir in low densities. This was the first time Blue Catfish were collected during gill net surveys, following stockings in 2009 and 2010.
- **Largemouth Bass:** Largemouth Bass were present in the reservoir in low densities, likely from a combination of turbid water and limited littoral habitat resulting in poor recruitment.
- **White Bass:** White Bass were present in the reservoir in low densities. The poor prey base likely limits White Bass abundance.

**Management Strategies:** Continue assisting the controlling authority with giant salvinia management and continue annual Aquatic Nuisance Species surveys. Continue to manage all sport fish with statewide regulations.

## Introduction

This document is a summary of fisheries data collected from Striker Reservoir in 2019-2020. The purpose of the document is to provide fisheries information and make management recommendations to protect and improve the sport fishery. While information on other fishes was collected, this report deals primarily with major sport fishes and important prey species. Historical data are presented with the 2019-2020 data for comparison.

## Reservoir Description

Striker Reservoir is a 1,920-acre impoundment constructed in 1957 on Striker Creek, a tributary of the Angelina River in the Neches River Basin. It is located in Rusk county approximately 10 miles southeast of New Summerfield, Texas and is operated and controlled by the Angelina-Nacogdoches County Water Control and Improvement District. Primary water uses flood control, condenser cooling for a stem-electric generating plant and recreation. Striker Reservoir was mesotrophic with a mean TSI cl-a of 41.6 (Texas Commission on Environment Quality 2020). Habitat at time of sampling consisted of natural shoreline, boat docks, native vegetation and giant salvinia. Water level has remained within 3 feet of conservation pool since 2012 (Figure 1). Other descriptive characteristics for Striker Reservoir are in Table 1.

## Angler Access

Striker Reservoir has one improved boat ramp at Lake Striker Marina, which was dredged and extended during low water levels in 2012. A second unimproved boat ramp is available on the north end of the reservoir. Additional boat ramp characteristics are in Table 2. Shoreline access is limited to the boat ramp areas and the courtesy dock located at Lake Striker Marina.

## Management History

**Previous management strategies and actions:** Management strategies and actions from the previous survey report (Ott and Norman 2017) included:

1. Conduct annual Aquatic Nuisance Species (ANS) surveys to monitor giant salvinia abundance. Work with the controlling authority to maintain contract herbicide applications and provide updates to the controlling authority as necessary.

**Action:** Annual ANS surveys have been conducted since 2015 and giant salvinia abundance in the reservoir is still managed with contract herbicide treatments.

2. Adjust the sampling and report rotation to align with the Tyler district office schedule.

**Action:** A three-year management plan was implemented in 2017 and a new report for Striker Reservoir was completed in 2020.

**Harvest regulation history:** Sport fish in Striker Reservoir are managed under statewide regulations (Table 3).

**Stocking history:** Florida Largemouth Bass fingerlings were stocked in 1976, 1995, and 1997. Palmetto Bass were last stocked in 1999. Threadfin Shad were successfully introduced in 1974 and 1976. Blue Catfish were stocked in 2009 and 2010. The complete stocking history is shown in Table 4.

**Vegetation/habitat management history:** Striker Reservoir's submersed aquatic vegetation coverage has historically been limited. The feasibility of conducting a fertilization program was assessed in 2006, but related costs and the amount of fertilizer needed were impractical. Water willow introductions were conducted in 2009 and 2012. In coordination with the controlling authority and the Lake Striker Homeowner Association, brush piles were deployed on several occasions to increase habitat and angler catch. As part of research exploring brush pile size and configuration, over 200 cedar trees were deployed in 2011. Giant Salvinia was first documented at the reservoir in fall 2012. In June 2014 an integrated management plan featuring containment, herbicide treatments, salvinia weevil release and

mechanical removal was implemented. In August 2014, the upper boat ramp was temporarily closed to reduce the probability of giant salvinia being transferred to other water bodies and warning signage was erected. In October 2014, the first regular herbicide treatments were conducted. In November 2014, the controlling authority filed an Aquatic Vegetation Treatment Proposal for mechanical removal giving waterfront property owners the option of collecting and removing giant salvinia from their waterfront for proper disposal. In February 2015, a containment boom was installed upstream of the Eight-Ball boat ramp to minimize movement of salvinia and facilitating herbicide treatment which ultimately allowed the boat ramp to be re-opened. In June 2015 Striker Reservoir was added to a list of reservoirs that could receive funding from the Rider 34 (Statewide Aquatic Vegetation and Invasive Species Management). This allowed district staff to initiate development of an Inter-local contract with the controlling authority to allow reimbursement of up to \$20,000 annually in herbicide treatments for FY 2016 and 2017; all prior costs were incurred by the controlling authority. In October 2015, approximately 370 lbs. of Giant Salvinia containing an estimated 21,000 adult salvinia weevils was distributed into the untreated area upstream of the boom. Using funding from Rider 34 herbicide treatments were expanded to the previously untreated area upstream from the boom and continued during the growing season of 2016 and into 2017. Reservoir-wide spot treatments of giant salvinia have been conducted annually since 2018.

**Water transfer:** The controlling authority provides cooling water for Southern Company's biomass-fired power plant in Sacul, which is about 10 miles southeast of the reservoir. The City of Henderson also has an option for future water use. No interbasin transfers are known to exist.

## Methods

Surveys were conducted to achieve survey and sampling objectives in accordance with the objective-based sampling (OBS) plan for Striker Reservoir (Ott and Norman 2017). Primary components of the OBS plan are listed in Table 5. All surveys were conducted according to the Fishery Assessment Procedures (TPWD, Inland Fisheries Division, unpublished manual revised 2017).

**Electrofishing** – Largemouth Bass, sunfishes, Gizzard Shad and Threadfin Shad were collected by electrofishing (0.9 hours at 11, 5-min stations). Catch per unit effort (CPUE) for electrofishing was recorded as the number of fish caught per hour (fish/h) of actual electrofishing.

**Gill netting** – Blue Catfish, Channel Catfish and White Bass were collected by gill netting (5 net nights at 5 stations). CPUE for gill netting was recorded as the number of fish caught per net night (fish/nn).

**Statistics** – Sampling statistics (CPUE for various length categories), structural indices [Proportional Size Distribution (PSD), terminology modified by Guy et al. 2007], and condition indices [relative weight ( $W_r$ )] were calculated for target fishes according to Anderson and Neumann (1996). Index of Vulnerability (IOV) was calculated for Gizzard Shad (DiCenzo et al. 1996). Standard error (SE) was calculated for structural indices and IOV. Relative standard error (RSE = 100 X SE of the estimate/estimate) was calculated for all CPUE and creel statistics.

**Habitat** – A vegetation survey was conducted in 2019. Habitat was assessed with the digital shapefile method (TPWD, Inland Fisheries Division, unpublished manual revised 2017).

**Water level** – Source for water level data was the United States Geological Survey (USGS 2019).

## Results and Discussion

**Habitat:** Cutgrass continues to slowly increase along the shoreline, especially on the upper half of the lake that is heavily silted in. Maidencane and a mixture of native floating leaved species (white water lily and spatterdock) remained in similar abundance to the previous survey. Giant salvinia continues to be the most abundant species present and periodically covers the majority of the reservoir above the Eight-Ball ramp. Isolated patches of salvinia were present throughout most of the reservoir behind the cutgrass. Contract herbicide treatments are ongoing and have helped maintain salvinia abundance along most of the main-lake shoreline. The complete results from the 2019 vegetation survey are in Table 6. A structural survey was conducted in 2008 (Ashe and Driscoll 2009).

**Prey species:** Electrofishing catch rates of Gizzard Shad and Bluegill were 3.27/h and 10.91/h, respectively. Index of Vulnerability (IOV) for Gizzard Shad was moderate and similar to previous night-time electrofishing surveys, indicating that 67% of Gizzard Shad were available to existing predators (Figure 2). Total CPUE of Gizzard Shad was substantially lower than the previous night-time survey (61.0/h). Total CPUE of Bluegill was low over the last three night-time surveys (range: 10.9.0/h-38.0/h), and size structure continued to be dominated by small individuals (Figure 3).

**Catfish:** Blue Catfish were collected for the first time during the 2020 gill net survey. Despite low densities (CPUE: 0.6/h; Figure 4), the survey results indicate some survival from stockings in either 2009 or 2010. All three fish collected were between 19 to 23 inches long.

The 2020 gill net catch rate of Channel Catfish was 2.2/nn, down from the previous surveys (9.4/nn, 2009 and 4.6/nn, 2013; Figure 5). The scheduled 2020 hoop net survey was canceled due to better catch rates with gill nets; the 2017 hoop net survey did not collect any catfish.

**White Bass:** White Bass were present in the reservoir, but their population density remained low. Catch rates over the last three surveys (2009, 2013, 2020) ranged between 0.4/nn to 0.8/nn (Figure 6).

**Black Bass:** Despite an increasing trend in black bass densities from 2009-2013, the very low catch rates for both Spotted Bass (CPUE: 13.09/h; Figure 7) and Largemouth Bass (CPUE: 6.55/h; Figure 8) in

2019 suggest overall black bass recruitment is still limited by high turbidity and silt accumulation. While body condition of the few fish collected was good ( $Wr \geq 90$  for most size classes) for both Spotted and Largemouth Bass the overall poor prey base likely further limits black bass densities.

# Fisheries Management Plan for Striker Reservoir, Texas

Prepared – July 2020

**ISSUE 1:** Cumulative siltation is negatively impacting most sportfish populations in the reservoir. Heavy silt deposits continue to reduce quality spawning substrate and limit aquatic macrophyte growth, which further limits recruitment for most sport fish. A large-scale dredging of the upper 1/3 of the reservoir is the only approach capable of restoring quality substrate and habitat necessary to improve recruitment.

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

1. If funding streams become available for large-scale dredging operations, submit a proposal for Striker Reservoir.

**ISSUE 2:** Giant salvinia has and will continue to be the most important component of managing Striker Reservoir. While poor water quality (turbidity) and habitat (heavy siltation) limit sport fish abundance, the potential to limit the spread of salvinia to other water bodies is still important.

## MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

1. Continue annual Aquatic Nuisance Species surveys of Striker Reservoir.
2. Continue to assist the controlling authority in obtaining TPWD invasive species funding for chemical treatment of Giant Salvinia.
3. Continue to monitor the condition of the containment boom in the upper end of the reservoir to reduce the probability that Giant Salvinia will be transferred to other reservoirs.
4. Continue to assist the controlling authority in conducting outreach to reduce spread of Giant Salvinia with emphasis on Clean Drain Dry campaign materials.
5. Keep track of (i.e., map) existing and future inter-basin water transfers to facilitate potential invasive species responses.

## **Objective-Based Sampling Plan and Schedule (2020–2024)**

### Sport fish, forage fish and other important fishes

Sport fish in Striker Reservoir include Largemouth and Spotted Bass, Blue and Channel Catfish, White Bass and crappie. Gizzard and Threadfin Shad, and sunfishes are all present in the reservoir.

### Low-density fisheries

Recent electrofishing results have yielded very poor catch rates for all target species (black bass, shad and sunfish). While previous surveys (2008 and 2012) produced better results, the limited data collected in 2015 (day-time survey; Ott and Norman 2017) and 2019 suggest electrofishing is not a consistent survey method on Striker Reservoir. Without a substantial justification to conduct a creel survey, and very little anecdotal information on angler utilization of the reservoir, electrofishing surveys will be discontinued.

Channel Catfish have historically been present in the reservoir, and three Blue Catfish were collected in the 2020 gill net survey, however gill net surveys have produced low and variable catch rates. The limited data collected in 2015 and 2019 suggest gill netting is not a consistent survey method on Striker Reservoir. Without a substantial justification to conduct a creel survey, and very little anecdotal information on angler utilization of the reservoir, gill net surveys will be discontinued. However, the recent collection of adult Blue Catfish warrants future monitoring to determine if the population is expanding. An exploratory low-frequency electrofishing survey will be conducted in the summer of 2023 to detect Blue Catfish presence and help determine future sampling needs.

### Survey objectives, fisheries metrics and sampling objectives

**Crappie:** Historical Trap net data suggested Striker Reservoir contained a quality crappie population. However, due to variable catch rates (CPUE range: 1.2/nn – 15.4/nn; 2003-2012), trap net surveys were discontinued in 2016). In the fall of 2023 five randomly selected trap nets will be set to determine the feasibility of monitoring the crappie population with trap net surveys. If the 2023 survey is successful, trap nets will continue to be used on Striker Reservoir every four years to monitor population indices (relative abundance and size structure). Due to the exploratory nature of this survey technique, no sampling objectives will be set.

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## Tables and Figures

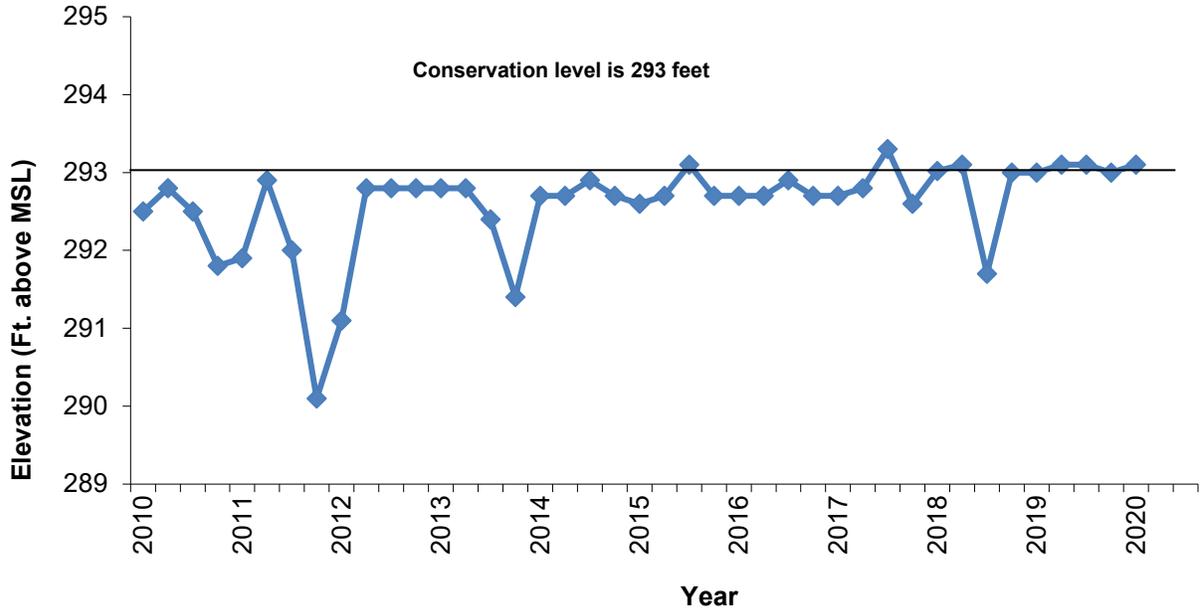


Figure 1. Quarterly water level elevations in feet above mean sea level (MSL) recorded for Striker Reservoir, Texas.

Table 1. Characteristics of Striker Reservoir, Texas.

Characteristic	Description
Year constructed	1957
Controlling authority	Angelina & Nacogdoches Counties Water Control & Improvement District
County	Rusk
Reservoir type	Tributary
Shoreline Development Index	2.2
Mean depth	15 feet
Secchi visibility (range)	1-3 feet
Conductivity	200 $\mu$ S/cm

Table 2. Boat ramp characteristics for Striker Reservoir, Texas July, 2019. Reservoir elevation at time of survey was feet above mean sea level.

Boat ramp	Latitude Longitude (dd)	Public	Parking capacity (N)	Elevation at end of boat ramp (ft)	Condition
Striker Reservoir Marina	31.940984 -94.975349	Y	30	290.0	Good, no access issues
8-Ball Ramp	31.987375 -94.991658	Y	5	289.5	Condition is poor and suitable for small boats only

Table 3. Harvest regulations for Striker Reservoir, Texas.

Species	Bag limit	Length limit
Catfish: Channel and Blue Catfish, their hybrids and subspecies	25 (in any combination)	12-inch minimum
Catfish, Flathead	5	18-inch minimum
Bass, White	25	10-inch minimum
Bass, Largemouth	5 <sup>a</sup>	14-inch minimum
Bass, Spotted	5 <sup>a</sup>	None
Crappie: White and Black crappie, their hybrids and subspecies	25 (in any combination)	10-inch minimum

<sup>a</sup> Daily bag for Largemouth Bass and Spotted Bass = 5 fish in any combination.

Table 4. Stocking history of Striker Reservoir, Texas. FGL = fingerling; ADL = adult; UNK = unknown.

Species	Year	Number	Size
Blue Catfish	2009	95,936	FGL
	2010	95,754	FGL
	Total	191,690	
Channel Catfish	1973	5,000	UNK
Florida Largemouth Bass	1976	2000,000	FGL
	1995	120,000	FRY
	1997	120,186	FGL
	Total	440,186	
Palmetto Bass	1979	80,000	UNK
	1998	49,023	FGL
	1999	24,215	FGL
	Total	153,238	
Red Drum	1975	18,435	UNK
Threadfin Shad	1974	15,000	ADL
	1976	30,000	ADL
	Total	45,000	

Table 5. Objective-based sampling plan components for Striker Reservoir, Texas 2019-2020.

Gear/target species	Survey objective	Metrics	Sampling objective
<i>Electrofishing</i>			
Largemouth Bass	Relative Abundance	CPUE–Stock	RSE-Stock $\leq 25$
	Size structure	PSD, length frequency	
Bluegill <sup>a</sup>	Relative Abundance	CPUE–Total	RSE $\leq 25$
	Size structure	PSD, length frequency	N $\geq 50$
Gizzard Shad <sup>a</sup>	Relative Abundance	CPUE–Total	
	Prey availability	IOV	N $\geq 50$
<i>Hoop netting</i>			
Channel Catfish	Exploratory/gear efficacy		

<sup>a</sup> No additional effort will be expended to achieve an RSE  $\leq 25$  for CPUE of Bluegill and Gizzard Shad if not reached from designated Largemouth Bass sampling effort. Instead, Largemouth Bass body condition can provide information on forage abundance, vulnerability, or both relative to predator density.

Table 6. Survey of aquatic vegetation, Striker Reservoir, Texas, 2015–2019. Surface area (acres) is listed with percent of total reservoir surface area in parentheses.

Vegetation	2015	2016	2017	2019
<b>Native Floating-leaved</b>				
Spatterdock		46 (2.4)		3.5 (<1)
<b>Native emergent</b>				
Button Bush		116 (6.0)		
Cutgrass		7.0 (0.4)		12.6 (<1)
Maidencane				5.4 (<1)
Water Willow		Trace		
<b>Non-native</b>				
Giant Salvinia (Tier II)	165 (9.0)	12 (0.6)	180(9.4)	175 (9.1)
Alligatorweed (Tier II)		1 (<1))		2.4 (<1)

Gizzard Shad

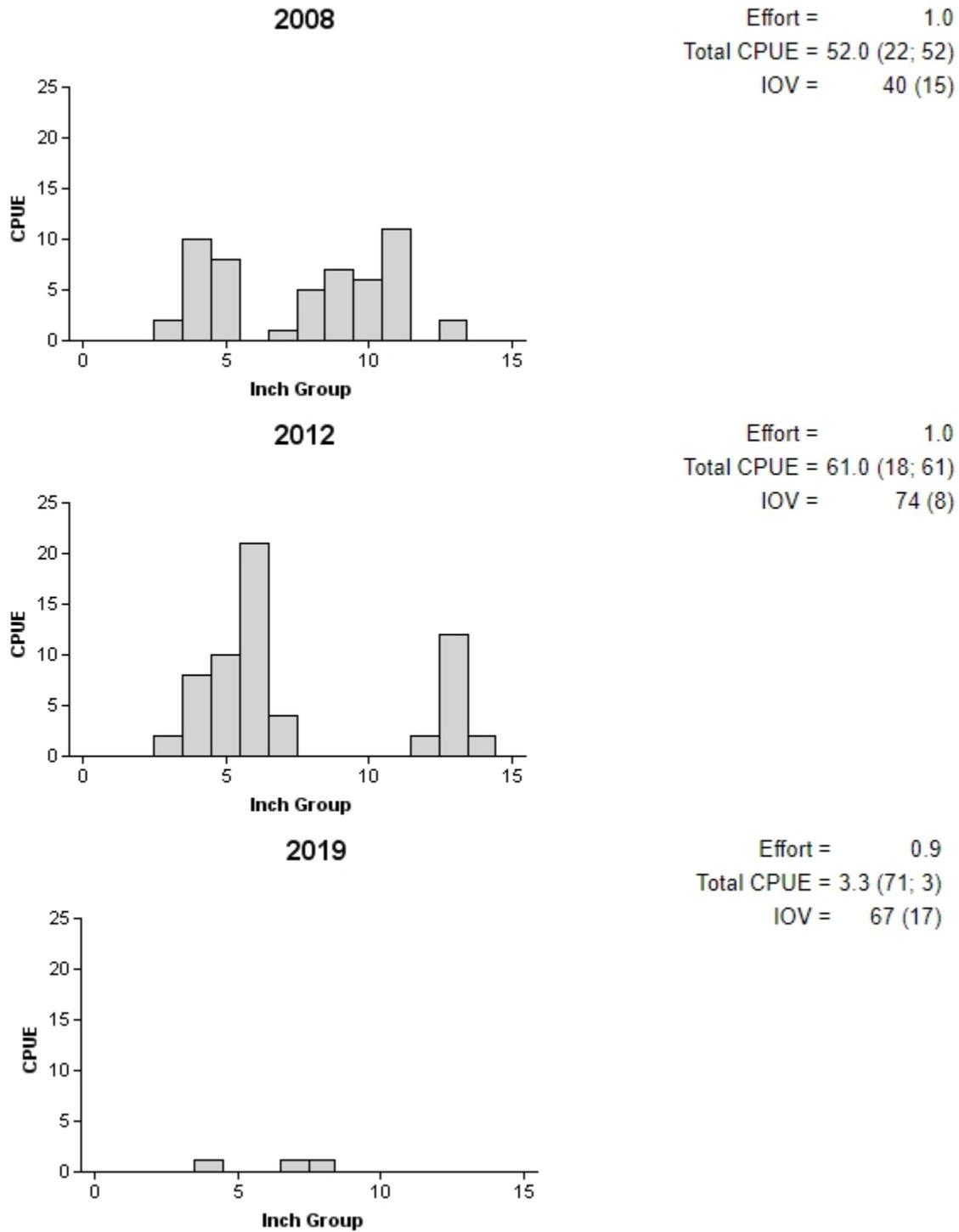


Figure 2. Number of Gizzard Shad caught per hour (CPUE) and population indices (RSE and N for CPUE and SE for IOV are in parentheses) for fall electrofishing surveys, Striker Reservoir, Texas, 2008, 2012 and 2019.

Bluegill

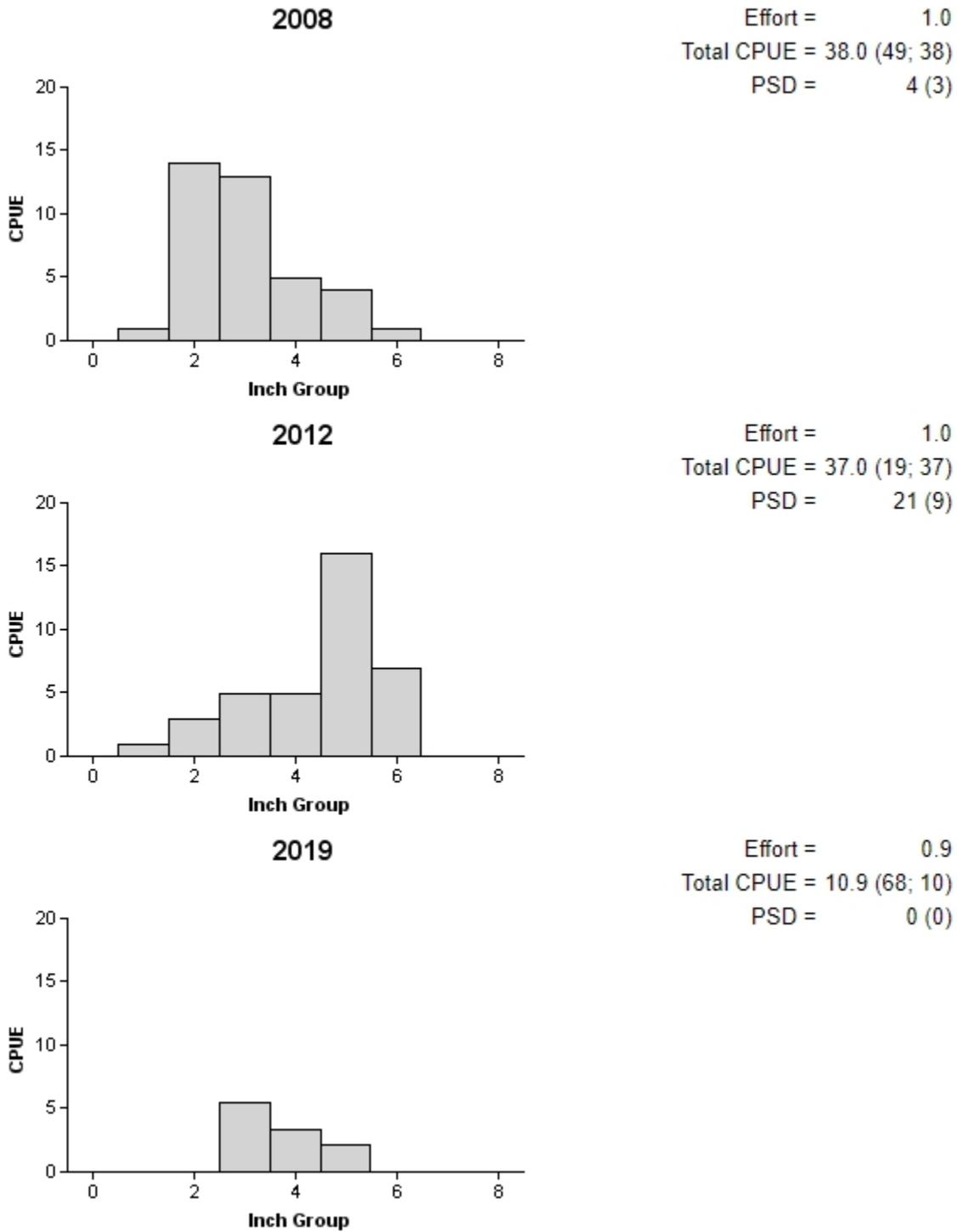


Figure 3. Number of Bluegill caught per hour (CPUE) and population indices (RSE and N for CPUE and SE for size structure are in parentheses) for fall electrofishing surveys, Striker Reservoir, Texas, 2008, 2012 and 2019.

## Blue Catfish

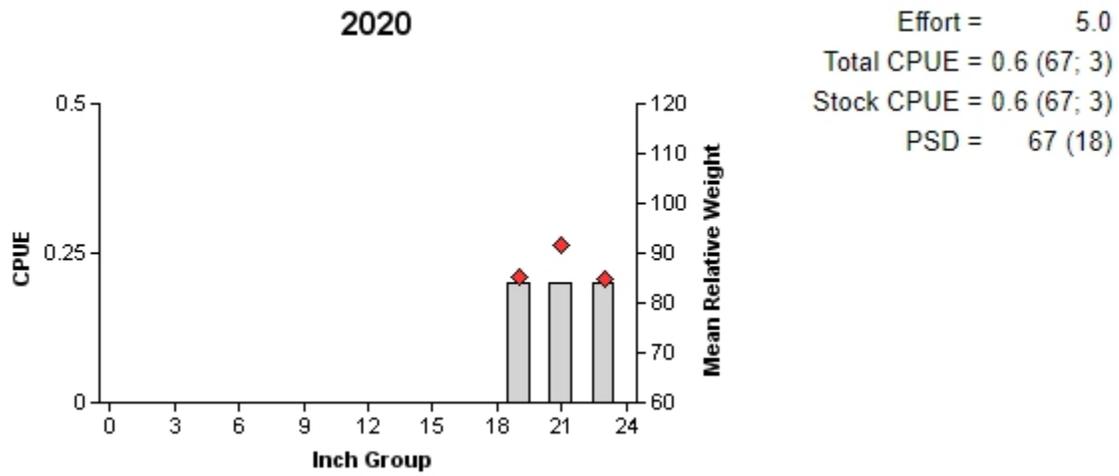


Figure 4. Number of Blue Catfish caught per net night (CPUE), mean relative weight (diamonds) and population indices (RSE and N for CPUE and SE for size structure are in parentheses) for spring gill net surveys, Striker Reservoir, Texas, 2020.

### Channel Catfish

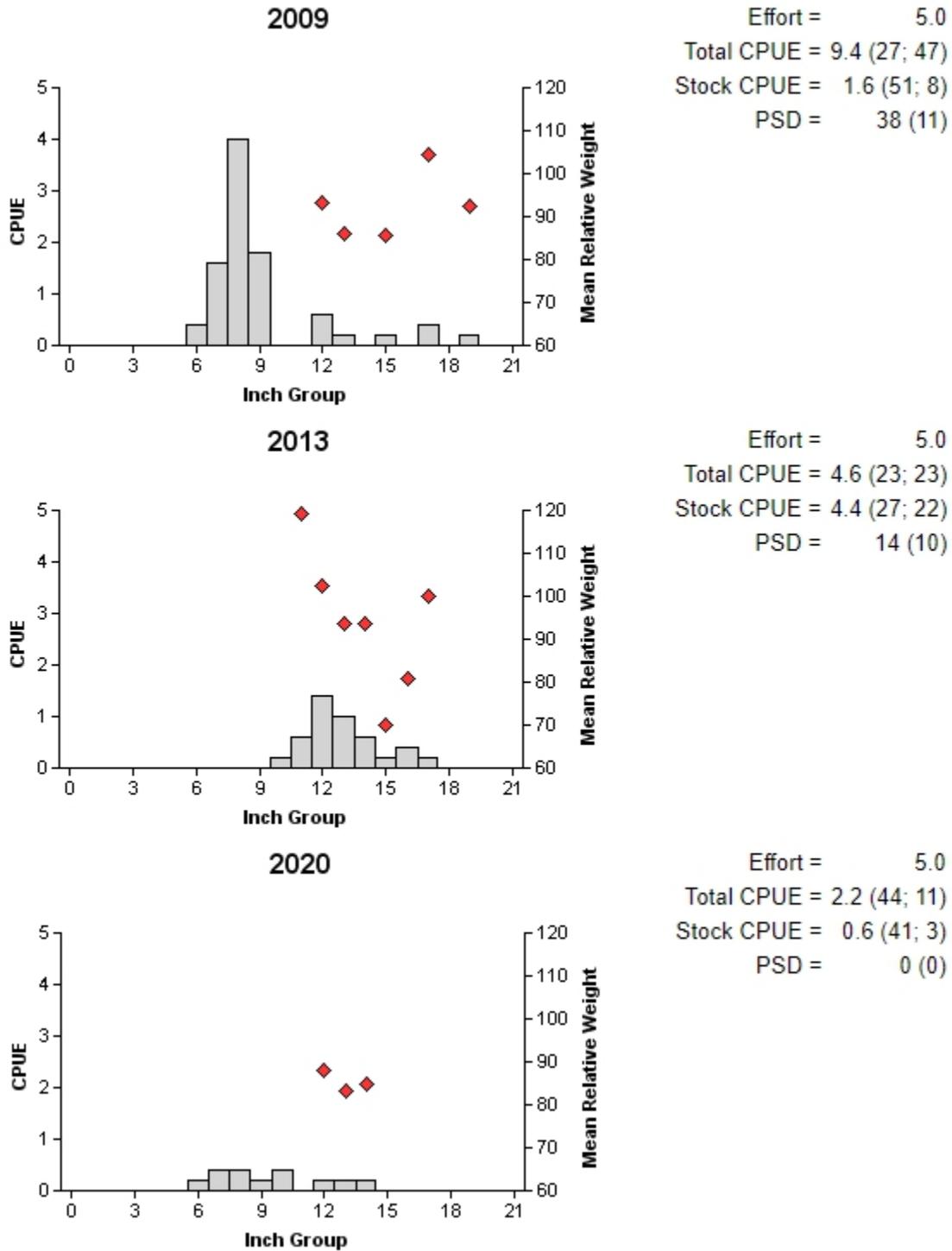


Figure 5 Number of Channel Catfish caught per net night (CPUE), mean relative weight (diamonds) and population indices (RSE and N for CPUE and SE for size structure are in parentheses) for spring gill net surveys, Striker Reservoir, Texas, 2009, 2013 and 2020.

### White Bass

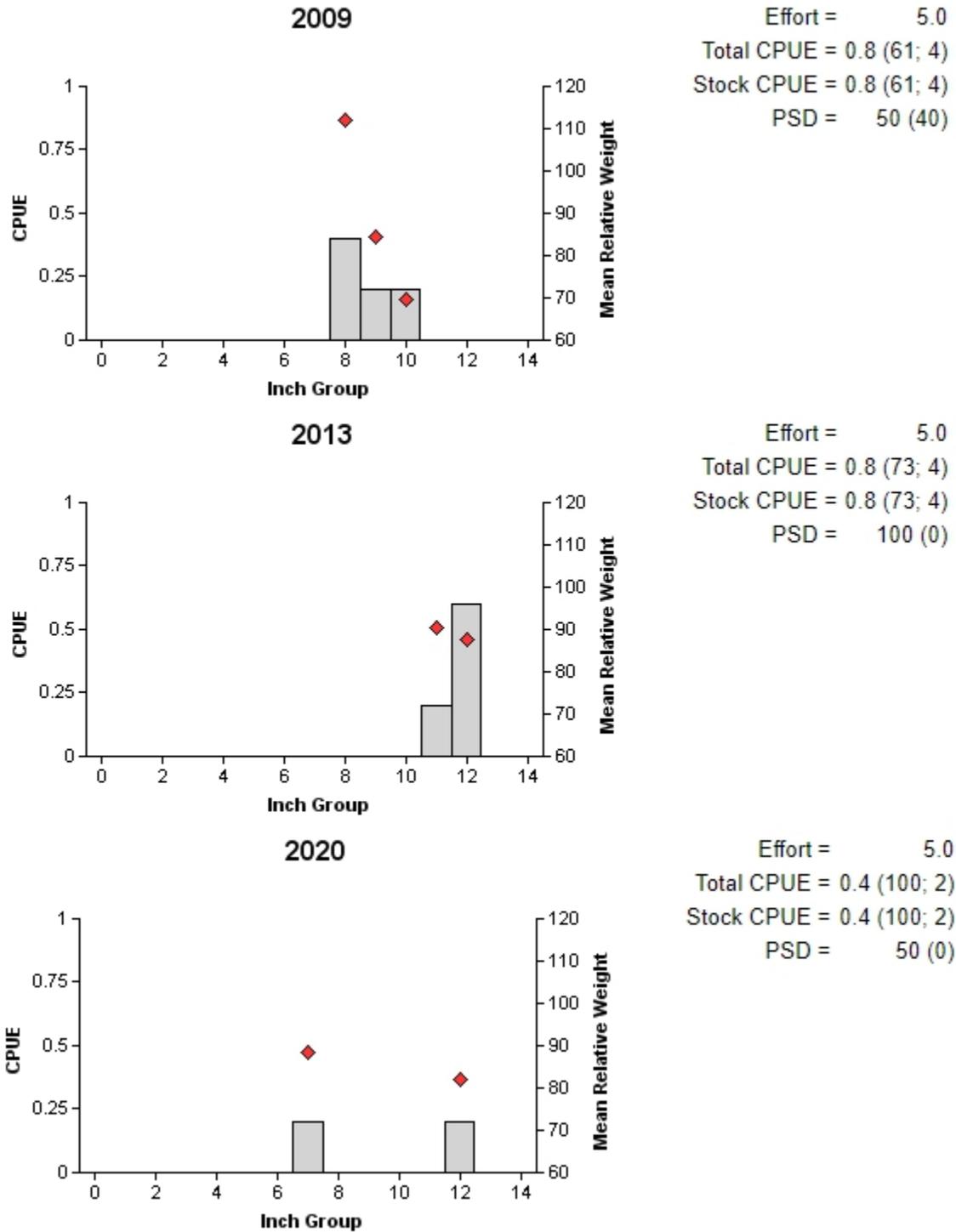


Figure 6 Number of White Bass caught per net night (CPUE), mean relative weight (diamonds) and population indices (RSE and N for CPUE and SE for size structure are in parentheses) for spring gill net surveys, Striker Reservoir, Texas, 2009, 2013 and 2020.

## Spotted Bass

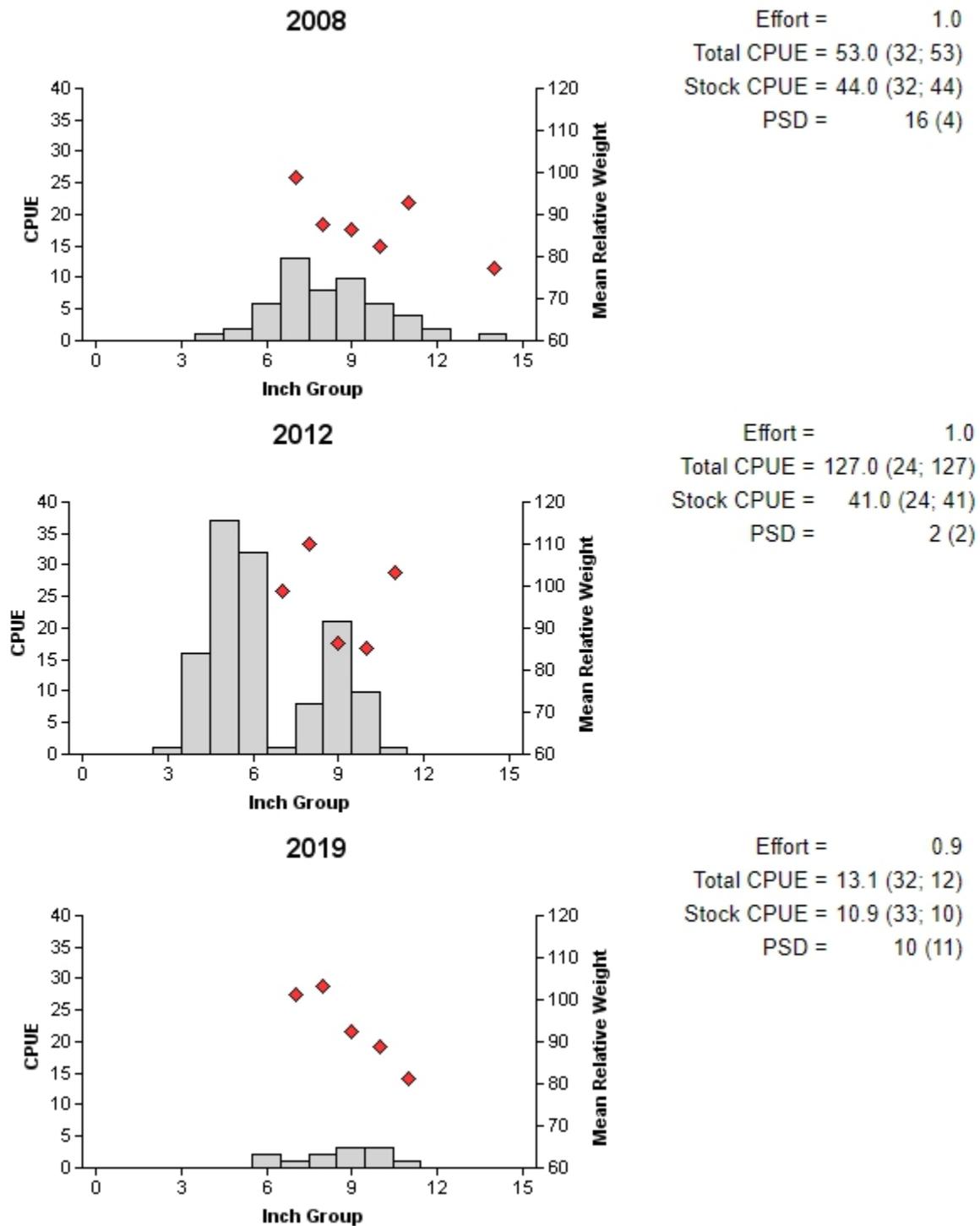


Figure 7. Number of Spotted Bass caught per hour (CPUE), mean relative weights (diamonds), and population indices (RSE and N for CPUE and SE for size structure are in parentheses) for daytime fall electrofishing surveys, Striker Reservoir, Texas, 2008, 2012 and 2020.

## Largemouth Bass

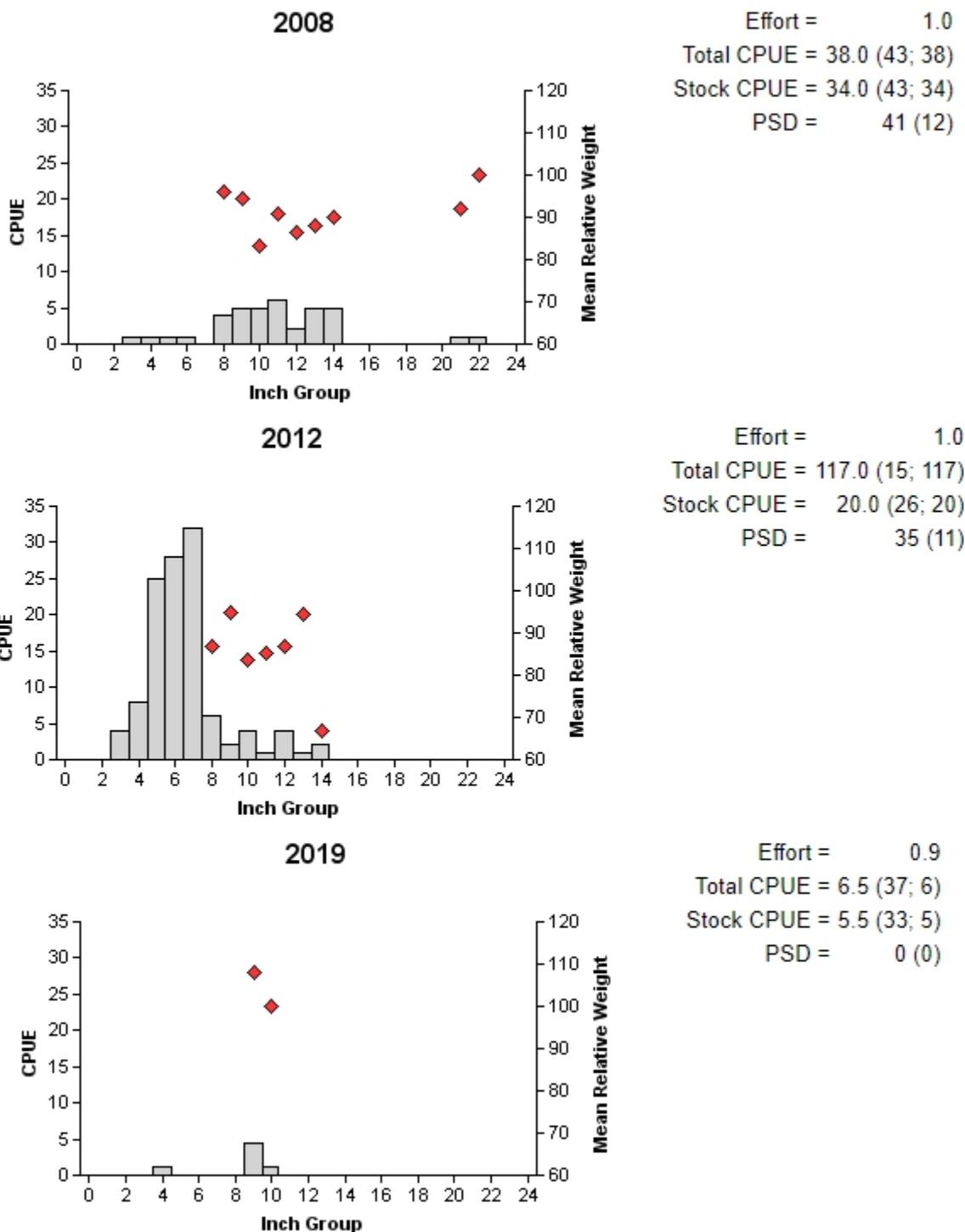


Figure 8. Number of Largemouth Bass caught per hour (CPUE), mean relative weights (diamonds), and population indices (RSE and N for CPUE and SE for size structure are in parentheses) for daytime fall electrofishing surveys, Striker Reservoir, Texas, 2008, 2012 and 2020.

## Proposed Sampling Schedule

Table 7. Proposed sampling schedule for Striker Reservoir, Texas. Survey period is June through May. Gill netting surveys are conducted in the spring, while electrofishing and trap netting surveys are conducted in the fall. Standard survey denoted by S and additional survey denoted by A.

	Survey year			
	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Angler Access				S
Vegetation	A	A	A	S
Trap netting				S
Report				S

## APPENDIX A – Catch rates for all species from all gear types

Number (N) and catch rate (CPUE) (RSE in parentheses) of all target species collected from all gear types from Striker Reservoir, Texas, 2018-2019. Sampling effort was 5 net nights for gill netting, and 1 hour for electrofishing.

Species	Gill Netting		Electrofishing	
	N	CPUE	N	CPUE
Gizzard Shad			3	3.3(71)
Threadfin Shad			4	4.4(100)
Blue Catfish	3	0.6(67)		
Channel Catfish	11	2.2(44)		
White Bass	2	0.4(100)		
Bluegill			10	10.9(68)
Longear Sunfish			6	6.6(51)
Redear Sunfish			1	1.1(100)
Spotted Bass			12	13.1(32)
Largemouth Bass			6	6.6(37)





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