Distribution and Summer Habitat Use of Bodie Bass in Lake Norman, NC

Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration
Project F–108

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2025

Keywords: Hybrid Striped Bass, Bodie Bass, Lake Norman, thermal tolerance, movement, distribution, telemetry, habitat use, habitat suitability

Recommended Citation

Roberts, K. J., L. G. Dorsey, P. A. Wheeler, and C. G. Joubert. 2025. Distribution and summer habitat use of Bodie Bass in Lake Norman, NC. North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration, Project F–108, Final Report, Raleigh.

This project was funded under the Federal Aid in Sport Fish Restoration Program utilizing state fishing license money and federal grant funds derived from federal excise taxes on fishing tackle and other fishing related expenditures. Funds from the Sport Fish Restoration Program are used for fisheries management and research, aquatic education, and boating access facilities. The program is administered cooperatively by the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Abstract. Hybrid Striped Bass *Morone chrysops x M. saxatilis*, or Bodie Bass as they are officially named in North Carolina, are a popular alternative to stocking Striped Bass *M. saxatilis* in reservoirs in North Carolina and across the Southeast due to their fast growth and higher thermal tolerance. Despite their popularity, little is known about their summer habitat use and seasonal distribution in NC reservoirs. In this study, Bodie Bass were implanted with pressure and temperature-enabled Innovasea V9TP–2x coded acoustic transmitters and Lotek MCFT2–3FM coded radio transmitters in 2020 (n = 50) and 2021 (n = 64). Passive Innovasea VR-2KW receivers (n = 44) were used to continuously monitor fish locations, depth (m), and temperature (˚C) throughout Lake Norman, a 13,152–ha cooling reservoir, from May 2020 to November 2022. Fish were manually located monthly during the fall, winter, and spring, and located weekly during peak summer stratification (typically mid-July through August). Dissolved oxygen profile data were paired with detections to determine the temperature and dissolved oxygen tolerance ranges for this species in Lake Norman. Bodie Bass occupied deeper water (>5 m) during the summer (June, July, August) and winter months (December, January, February) and were in shallower water (<5 m) in the fall (September, October, November) and spring months (March, April, May). During the summer months, fish were widely distributed throughout the reservoir and a subset of fish utilized the upper reservoir area near the Buffalo Shoals Road bridge as a refuge. Use of the deep-water habitat located near the dam also increased during the summer by some fish, but overall was relatively underutilized during this period. During the summer stratification period (July–August), fish were primarily detected in the epilimnion and avoided the metalimnion and hypolimnion. During this time, a sub-set of fish exhibited diving behavior to access the hypolimnion. However, once oxygen in the hypolimnion fell below 1.5–2.0 mg/L, typically in July, detections in the hypolimnion decreased almost completely, especially in the Lower Forebay Zone, and fish sustained average weekly temperatures > 27 ˚C in the epilimnion through September. From the observations in this study, the preferred temperature range of Bodie Bass in Lake Norman was estimated to be 21.1–24.5 °C. Bodie Bass appeared to prioritize preferred water temperatures in the early summer until dissolved oxygen became limiting. Bodie Bass then selected waters with dissolved oxygen concentrations > 4.8 mg/L at the cost of higher water temperatures. In summary, high thermal tolerance and avoidance of the hypolimnion make Bodie Bass an excellent candidate for reservoirs where previous fish kills of Striped Bass or other top predators are common.

Hybrid Striped Bass *Morone saxatilis* x *M. Chrysops*, officially named Bodie Bass in North Carolina, are a popular sportfish commonly stocked in reservoirs throughout the United States to provide unique angler opportunities. Bodie Bass have been stocked in North Carolina reservoirs since 1977 (J. Evans, North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, unpublished data) and are known to experience fast growth and thrive in warm, shallow, often eutrophic Southeastern reservoirs (Shultz et al. 2013). While Striped Bass *M. saxatilis* have historically been stocked more prevalently throughout the Southeast, Bodie Bass have become a popular alternative for management agencies due to their perceived robustness. Despite the popularity of Bodie Bass with anglers and fisheries managers alike, research has primarily focused on reservoir Striped Bass and less is known about the habitat needs and seasonal distribution of Bodie Bass.

Landlocked Striped Bass and Bodie Bass can be vulnerable to fish kills in Southeastern reservoirs. During summer, suitable habitat becomes limited when epilimnion water temperatures increase and cooler hypolimnion waters become hypoxic due to reservoir stratification. During stratification, Striped Bass seek refuge in the deeper, cooler, waters of the hypolimnion, which typically contains oxygenated water in early summer (Coutant 1985). As stratification intensifies, the availability of cooler oxygenated water in the hypolimnion decreases as the metalimnion hinders mixing and fish passage. Trapped fish will continue to occupy this oxygen bubble in the hypolimnion as it slowly becomes hypoxic, resulting in mortality or forced vertical movement into warm oxygenated waters (Coutant 1985; Coutant 2013; Rice et al. 2013). Consequently, Striped Bass populations in the Southeast often have poor growth or reduced body condition due to high metabolic needs (Thompson and Rice 2013), or suffer fish kills due to this well-documented “summertime oxygen squeeze” (Coutant 1985; Rice et al. 2013). Lake Norman, located in the Piedmont of North Carolina, was previously stocked with Striped Bass from the 1960s through 2012; however, due to poor growth, low body condition values, and frequent summer fish kills, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (Commission) began stocking Bodie Bass in replacement of Striped Bass in 2013. Since the introduction of Bodie Bass into Lake Norman there has been only one documented summertime Bodie Bass fish kill. In general, Bodie Bass stocked into the same system previously stocked with Striped Bass rarely experience fish kills, yet the mechanism behind this avoidance is not fully understood.

The first hypothesized mechanism that differentiates Bodie Bass and Striped Bass is the higher thermal tolerance of Bodie Bass, resulting in different habitat suitability needs than Striped Bass. A higher thermal tolerance may allow Bodie Bass to physically avoid the summer oxygen squeeze in the hypolimnion by occupying warmer, more oxygenated water for longer periods of time. However, information on the thermal tolerance and preferences of Bodie Bass varies widely (summarized in Table 1). In general, the preferred habitat for Bodie Bass in reservoirs is believed to include water temperatures ranging from 21.5 ˚C to 25.5 ˚C and dissolved oxygen (DO) concentrations greater than 4.5 mg/L (Kilpatrick 2003); however, they can tolerate temperatures ranging from 27.0 to 29.0 ˚C (Windham 1986) and even up to 33.0 ˚C (Piner 1993). In comparison, adult Striped Bass in reservoirs prefer similar temperatures (<25.0 ˚C; Coutant 1985; Coutant 2013; Table 2), but they have a limited capability to tolerate temperatures ranging from 27.0 to 29.0 ˚C for longer than 30 days (Matthews et al. 1989; Zale et al. 1990; Jackson and Hightower 2001) and rarely survive in water temperatures > 29.0 ˚C.

While Striped Bass appear to select cooler waters during late summer stratification, Bodie Bass appear to prioritize water with higher DO content. Though Striped Bass can occupy the oxycline (the area just above the thermocline) with minimal impacts on growth and survival (Thompson et al. 2010), Striped Bass may often be constrained to deeper water to satisfy thermal needs during late summer stratification. This causes a vertical separation during summer stratification where Bodie Bass have been shown to occupy shallower, warmer, and more oxygenated water compared to Striped Bass (Kilpatrick and Ney 2013). In previous studies, the average DO occupied by Bodie Bass in reservoirs during summer months ranged from 4.0 to 5.8 mg/L (Douglas and Jahn 1987; Kilpatrick and Ney 2013; Muncy et al. 1990; Piner 1993; Windham 1986). Thus, due to their stricter thermal tolerance and consequential habitat constraints, Striped Bass are at a higher risk of mortality during summer hypolimnetic hypoxia.

Seasonal movement patterns may also contribute to the robustness of Bodie Bass, yet when compared to Striped Bass, very few studies on the distribution of Bodie Bass exist. Seasonal movement patterns of landlocked Striped Bass and Bodie Bass are similar as both species have been shown to seek refuge during summer months, attempt spawning migrations, and exhibit seasonal feeding patterns. During the summer Striped Bass and Bodie Bass in reservoirs have been shown to occupy deep cooler water, typically upstream of an impounded dam, or seek refuge areas near the mouths of creeks or tailraces during the summer (Douglas and Jahn 1987; Hoffman et al. 2013; Kilpatrick and Ney 2013; Schaffler et al. 2002; Rabern 2022). Generally, Bodie Bass are present throughout the reservoir in spring and fall and are closest to the dam during the summer months (Hoffman et al. 2013; Douglas and Jahn 1987; Kilpatrick and Ney 2013; Phalen et al. 1988; Rabern 2022). Bettinger (2015) found a similar pattern but found that Bodie Bass moved into the lower reservoir later than Striped Bass. Differences in the location or the time spent in refuge habitats may be an important factor contributing to increased survivorship of Bodie Bass during the summer.

Lastly, diet preferences may impact summer mortality events for Striped Bass and Bodie Bass. The frequency of Striped Bass fish kills increased in some reservoirs after clupeid populations such as Alewife *Alosa pseudoharengus* or Blueback Herring *A. aestivalis*, collectively referred to as river herring, were introduced (Rice et al. 2013). For example, in Lake Norman (the study site), Striped Bass fish kills became more common after river herring were introduced in the late 1990s. Before the introduction of river herring, Striped Bass fish kills were infrequent and small (<30 fish; VanHorn et al. 1996). Summer fish kills of Striped Bass in Lake Norman occurred annually from 2009 to 2012. In 2010, a fish kill resulted in almost 7,000 dead Striped Bass (McRae 2010). As summer stratification intensifies at Lake Norman, river herring concentrate closer to the intake of the McGuire Nuclear Station (Rice et al. 2013). When oxygen falls below 1.0 mg/L in the hypolimnion for a prolonged amount of time, hydroacoustic fish surveys show that river herring disappear from this zone (presumably from mortality or consumption) and Striped Bass utilizing them as a prey source can become trapped in the diminishing oxygen bubble in the hypolimnion and suffer mortality (McRae 2010; Rice et al. 2013). As Striped Bass have been shown to feed almost exclusively on clupeid species (when present) during summer months (Thompson et al. 2010), Striped Bass may be more likely than Bodie Bass to follow cool-water clupeids into the hypolimnion and become trapped when prey and oxygen disappear (McRae 2010; Rice et al. 2013). Alternatively, Bodie Bass are more opportunistic feeders, consuming a variety of diet items throughout the year, ranging from invertebrates to centrarchids, to Gizzard Shad *Dorosoma cepedianum* (Olson et al. 2007). Their opportunistic diet may allow Bodie Bass to sustain metabolic needs in the epilimnion during summer stratification. Yet information on whether Bodie Bass exhibit a similar feeding behavior and ultimately a similar seasonal vertical distribution as Striped Bass is limited.

Overall, the technology used in previous research was limited to transmitters with temperature-only sensors, resulting in estimated depth calculations. Pressure and temperature transmitters are necessary to augment previous research on the horizontal and vertical seasonal distribution of Bodie Bass in reservoirs. The goals of this project were to: 1) evaluate seasonal horizontal and vertical distribution and, 2) estimate the physical tolerances of Bodie Bass to aid in the management of stocked populations in North Carolina reservoirs.

Methods

Study site. Lake Norman is a 13,152–ha oligotrophic reservoir impounded on the mainstem of the Catawba River in 1963 in the Piedmont region of North Carolina (DEQ 2023). The reservoir is operated as a cooling impoundment for two Duke Energy Corporation (DEC) generating facilities (McGuire Nuclear Station and Marshall Steam Station) and the reservoir receives heated effluent from both facilities. DEC also operates Cowans Ford Hydroelectric Station, a hydroelectric power plant located on the Cowans Ford Dam. Most of the reservoir's shoreline is heavily developed, where residential housing communities, piers, riprap, and bulkhead seawalls are the predominant shoreline structures. Aquatic cover such as woody debris and vegetation is limited. Lake Norman contains several other species of interest to anglers, including Largemouth and Florida bass hybrids *Micropterus nigricans x M. salmoides*, Alabama Bass *M. henshalli*, White Perch *Morone Americana*, Crappie *Pomoxis spp.*, Blue Catfish *Ictalurus furcatus*, Channel Catfish *I. punctatus*, and Flathead Catfish *Pylodictus olivaris*. Lake Norman is currently stocked with 325,000 Bodie Bass fingerlings a year, at a rate of 25 fish/ha. Bodie Bass in Lake Norman are managed with a 508-mm (20 in) minimum size limit and 4 fish daily creel limit.

For most analyses in this study, receivers were assigned to four large reservoir zones: Lower Forebay Zone, Upper Forebay Zone, Middle Zone, and Upper Zone (Figure 1; Appendices A and B). The Upper Zone begins at NC HWY 70 and extends downlake to NC HWY 150. The Upper Zone transitions from a riverine-like habitat to more of a lentic habitat containing the main river channel of the reservoir and several tributaries including Hicks, Rocky, and Stumpy creeks. The Middle Zone is mostly comprised of the main river channel and contains several tributaries, including Mountain and McCrary creeks. The Middle Zone also receives heated effluent from the Marshall Steam Station. The Upper Forebay Zone includes the main lake channel and Davidson Creek. Finally, the Lower Forebay Zone includes the deepest portions of the reservoir near the dam as well as Ramsey Creek. The Lower Forebay receives heated effluent from the McGuire Nuclear Station. Trophic status and productivity decrease from the Upper Zone downlake toward the Lower Forebay Zone (Duke Energy 2018; Duke Energy 2023). Relative abundance (i.e., CPUE; Duke Energy 2018; Siler et al. 1986) and harvest rates (Siler et al. 1986) also follow a similar trend as productivity and decrease from the upper portions of the lake toward the lower portions of the lake.

For distribution analyses, the zones were further divided into smaller areas. These areas contained one or more receivers representing similar habitats or tributaries (Appendices A and B). The furthest upstream area, named the Riverine Section, included receivers from Lyle's Creek to the Buffalo Shoals Road bridge. The Upper Lake Channel area contained receivers in the main reservoir channel from below the Buffalo Shoals Road bridge to NC HWY 150. The Upper Lake Creeks area contained receivers from tributaries between the Buffalo Shoals Road bridge to NC HWY 150 (Hicks, Rocky, and Stumpy creeks). The Mid Lake Channel area contained receivers in the main reservoir channel between NC HWY 150 and mile marker 10. The Lower Lake Channel contained receivers in the main reservoir channel below mile marker 10 to mile marker 1A. The Cowans Dam area was the forebay near the dam and contained receivers from mile marker 1A to the dam. The remaining reservoir areas were assigned names based on the tributary or creek the group of receivers were in. As an example, the Ramsey Creek area contained three receivers within the Ramsey Creek reservoir arm. In summary, the four large reservoir zones were used for the depth, temperature, and dissolved oxygen analyses, whereas the smaller areas within each zone were used to illustrate weekly distribution patterns.

Tagging. Bodie Bass were surgically implanted with Innovasea (Innovasea, Nova Scotia, Canada) coded acoustic V9TP–2x (9 x 31 mm; 4.9 g) and Lotek (Lotek, Newmarket, Canada) MCFT2–3FM coded radio telemetry transmitters (11 x 59 mm; 4.6 g) in May 2020 (n = 50) and May 2021 (n = 64). The acoustic tags alternated relaying temperature (˚C) and depth (m) information with each detection. All fish were captured in April of 2020 and 2021 using hook and line angling and transferred via a livewell to the tagging and release location. Fish were first anesthetized using a "knockout" dosage of 40 mg/L of Aqui–s 20E and anesthetization was maintained using a dosage of 20 mg/L during surgery. All fish were weighed (g) and measured (mm) after anesthetization and before being placed on the surgery board. Then, following procedures outlined in Murray (2002), surgery was performed by first inserting the radio telemetry tag, followed by the acoustic tag, through an incision posterior just below the pelvic fins. Using a similar procedure as described in Owensby (2017), the radio tag antenna was threaded through the intracoelomic cavity and exited posterior of the incision using a stainless-steel catheter and needle. Incisions were closed using two or three 3–0 interrupted monofilament synthetic absorbable sutures with a 3/8 circle reverse cutting needle. The total tag weight did not exceed 2% of the fish's body weight. Lastly, an external Floy (Floy, Seattle, WA) T-bar tag labeled with contact information and "do not harvest" was inserted into the musculature below the dorsal fin using a tagging gun. Fish recovered in a live pen and were released once recovery was observed and fish were swimming upright. Fish were released from a single location in 2020 and multiple locations in 2021. Capture and release locations were not recorded for individual fish.

Water Quality. Dissolved oxygen (DO; mg/L) and temperature (˚C) reservoir profiles were obtained from Duke Energy Corporation and the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality primarily during summer months at various standard locations throughout the reservoir from 2020–2022 (Figure 1; Appendix C). Dissolved oxygen and temperature were recorded at the surface and then at every meter beginning at approximately 1 m below the surface and continuing to 1 m above the bottom of the reservoir for each profile.

Fish Tracking. Active and manual tracking techniques were used to relocate fish. Radio transmitters allowed faster manual tracking whereas acoustic transmitters allowed continuous passive monitoring. From May 2020 to November 2022 an array of passive Innovasea VR-2KW receivers (*n* = 44) were used to continuously locate fish (Figure 1). Two receivers were placed downstream of the Cowans Ford Dam to detect emigration. A receiver was also placed in the heated effluent release zones of the McGuire Nuclear Station and Marshall Steam Station. Receivers were downloaded monthly during the fall, winter, and spring and weekly during the summer months. Fish were manually located using a boat-mounted radio antenna and a Lotek SRX800 receiver while traveling along the shoreline and mid-channel habitats of the reservoir. When a transmitter was detected, an Innovasea VR-165 omnidirectional hydrophone was used to determine the general location of the fish and transmitter depth (m), and temperature (˚C) were recorded. Exact locations were not determined due to time constraints and the high recreational use of the reservoir interfering with precise detections. Tagged fish were located monthly except during mid-July through August, when weekly location efforts were conducted. During weekly tracking efforts in the summer, DO (mg/L) was also recorded at the depth fish were located using a YSI Pro2030 (YSI Incorporated, Ohio, USA) handheld dissolved oxygen and conductivity meter. Monthly and weekly active tracking aided in finding fish that had died outside of the receiver ranges and in determining the individual fates of fish between months.

Data Analysis. Detections up to two weeks post-surgery were censored from data analysis to account for any surgery-related movement biases (Wilson et al. 2016). Fish that appeared to have died (i.e., located on the bottom of the reservoir indefinitely) were censored from data analysis beginning one day after the assigned death date. In 2021, four acoustic tags used in 2020 that were retrieved after suffering mortalities were implanted into new fish in 2021. After censored fish were removed, depth and temperature recordings were paired. This was necessary as receivers recorded depth (m) and temperature (˚C) of individual acoustic tags at separate intervals. Thus, 1,196,565 depth observations and 1,197,400 temperature observations were stored in a data set with 2,393,965 rows. To synchronize depth and temperature recordings, an algorithm in the R programming language (R Core Team 2024) was created to convert the distinct observations into a data set of paired observations. The algorithm found the most synchronic temperature observation for each depth observation for each fish and produced a dataset of paired observations. Any paired observations that were greater than 8 minutes apart or detected on receivers that were $\geq$ 1,500 m apart were removed. If there was a tie for the most synchronic temperature observation, a match was chosen randomly. For example, if there was a temperature observation two minutes before and two minutes after the depth observation, the best match was chosen randomly.

A second algorithm matched the paired temperature and depth observations to DO observations from the water quality profiles. Paired temperature and depth observations that were recorded at the same receiver station were matched with water quality measurements recorded within 1,500 m of the acoustic receiver and within 3 days of the paired observation. The best match was determined first by the proximity of the water quality profile to the acoustic receiver and secondly by synchronicity. Water quality profile observations were recorded at depth increments of $\geq$ 1 m, whereas the acoustic tags reported fish depth with sub-meter resolution, therefore, a linear interpolation was used to estimate the DO concentration between water quality profile observations directly above and below the exact fish depth. Several R packages were used during analyses including Geosphere (Hijmans 2024) for calculating distances between receivers, ggplot (Wickham 2016) to graph Figures 8–9, and NCIFD for data wrangling (Wheeler et al. 2023).

To evaluate horizontal distribution patterns (i.e., large-scale movement patterns throughout the lake) paired detections were then broken into weekly periods and the percentage of detections at each reservoir area per week was calculated. Weekly distribution percentages for reservoir areas were calculated for each year and for all years pooled. To evaluate changes in vertical distribution (i.e., depth) and temperature use, paired detections were also used to estimate the average monthly and weekly depth (m) and temperature (˚C) use of tagged Bodie Bass by zone for each year and by zone for all years pooled. Monthly quartiles were calculated for temperature (˚C) data, and the interquartile range (IQR), or the range from the 25th to the 75th percentile of data (i.e., the central 50% of data) was used to estimate thermal tolerances. The two receivers at the heated effluent zones were excluded in this analysis to limit any biases associated with the higher temperatures in those areas.

Paired detections that included DO data from the lower three zones (Lower Forebay Zone, Upper Forebay Zone, Middle Zone) were used to analyze DO use. Due to missing or inconsistent data in some years, DO values from the Upper Zone were not used. IQR and average DO were estimated for summer months (June–August) by zone and year. Monthly IQR and average DO were also calculated for summer months using pooled data from all three lower zones and years combined. In addition, monthly average DO was calculated from manual tracking data across the entire reservoir during summer months. Lastly, DO profiles from Duke Energy's Water Quality Station located just upstream of Cowans Ford Dam and detections from receivers in the main channel of the Lower Forebay were used to evaluate weekly changes in DO availability and depth use of tagged fish.

Results

Tagging and Fish Tracking. Fish tagged in 2020 (n = 50) weighed on average 1,526 g and had an average length of 491 mm. Fish tagged in 2021 (n = 64) weighed an average of 1,720 g and had an average length of 520 mm. There were an estimated 13 (26%) surgery-related mortalities in 2020 and 13 (20%) in 2021. After censoring mortalities, 1,196,565 depth observations and 1,197,400 temperature observations resulted in a data set with 2,393,965 detections from May 2020 to November 2022. Syncing temperature and depth detections resulted in 1,022,813 paired detections. A minimum of 106 active tracking days were completed, resulting in 754 re-locations of tagged fish. After censoring mortalities and incomplete records there were 348 re-locations recorded during June through August (2020 = 99; 2021 = 192; 2022 = 25). Only one fish emigrated out of Lake Norman through Cowans Ford Dam. Survival of the emigrated fish is unknown as it was detected on two receivers downstream of Cowans Ford Dam in March and April of 2022 before disappearing.

Water quality. A total of 44,711 paired depth and temperature detections from receivers were also paired with DO concentrations from reservoir profile data, 27,148 of which included DO data in the lower three zones during peak summer months (June–August). All water quality stations were used in pairing physical data with detections; however, station 1.0 (near the Cowans Ford Dam) was the only station consistently sampled for all three years of the study during summer months. Comparisons of DO between zones was not possible due to the lack of consistent water profile data collected from the three upper zones. The onset of stratification in the Lower Forebay Zone varied interannually, but generally, DO below the thermocline fell below 4.0 mg/L by early to mid-July. The Lower Forebay Zone did exhibit an oxygen bubble below the thermocline where DO concentrations increased and DO in this bubble typically fell below 1.0 mg/L in late July or August.

Horizontal Distribution. Overall, Bodie Bass used the entire reservoir, but some seasonal patterns were observed. Primarily, fish were detected on the receivers in the Riverine Section within the Upper Zone during weeks 15–20 (i.e., April to mid-May) in all three years (Figure 2). The percentage of total detections in all the areas of the Upper Zone (Riverine Section, Upper Lake Channel and Upper Lake Creeks) peaked during week 17 (i.e., late April), accounting for 59% of all detections that week (Figure 2). During calendar weeks 15–20, or early April through mid-May (i.e., the duration fish were detected in the Riverine Section of the reservoir), the average weekly transmitter temperatures pooled from 2021 and 2022 ranged between 15.2 ˚C (week 15) and 18.6 (week 20). Fish were minimally detected on receivers in the Riverine Section of the reservoir area after week 20 (i.e., detections in this area accounted for < 1.0% of the total detections for that week).

During weeks 21–25 (i.e., late May to mid-June), tagged fish were detected throughout the reservoir; however, most detections occurred in the Davidson Creek and Mid Lake Channel areas (Figure 2–3). As summer progressed, detections in the Riverine Section, Ramsey Creek, and Cowans Ford Dam areas increased. The timing of increased detections between areas varied slightly occurring during weeks 26–34 (i.e., late June through August) in the Cowans Ford Dam area, weeks 22–31 (i.e., mid-May through July) for the Ramsey Creek area, and weeks 25–39 (i.e., mid-June through September) for the Riverine Section (Figures 2–3). Aside from the weeks above, detections in the Cowans Ford Dam and Ramsey Creek areas were low and appeared to only be utilized in the summer (Figures 2–3). During weeks 40–53 (i.e., October to December) and weeks 1–13 (i.e., January to March) fish were widespread and detections in the Upper Lake Creeks and Mountain Creek areas increased. For example, detections in the Mountain Creek area increased around week 40 (i.e., early October) and remained high through week 10 (i.e., early March; Figures 2–3).

Interannual variations in reservoir area use also occurred. For example, detections in Davidson Creek increased beginning in week 1 (i.e., January) and peaked during week 10 (i.e., early March) in 2022, just before the spawning run, but this pattern was not observed in 2021 (Figure 3). Detections in Davidson Creek accounted for 50% of all detections during week 10 in 2022. Overall detections in the Mountain Creek area were higher in 2020 and 2021 compared to 2022. In general, Davidson Creek and the Mid Lake Channel areas consistently had the highest percentage of detections across all years. The use of the heated effluent areas was low (≤ 1% of total monthly detections) during all months at both stations.

Vertical Distribution. The average monthly depth of detections varied by season. The average monthly depth was shallower during the spring (March–May) and fall months (September–October) and deeper during the summer (June–August) and winter (December–February) months (Table 3). The average monthly depth of detections was the shallowest in April (average = 2.2 m; SE = 0.01). As water temperatures warmed some fish were detected in deeper cooler water, yet most detections remained in the epilimnion (<10 m). The average depth of detections was the deepest in June (average = 7.9 m; SE = 0.01) and July (average = 7.9 m; SE = 0.01). By August, the average depth of detections decreased (average = 6.2 m; SE =

0.01) and almost all detections occurred in the epilimnion. The average monthly transmitter depth and temperature also varied by zone, where fish detected in the Lower Forebay Zone were detected in deeper cooler water during the summer compared to other zones (Tables 3–4). In the Lower Forebay Zone, the average monthly depth was deepest in June (average = 10.0 m; SE = 0.04) and July (average = 10.8 m; SE = 0.04; Table 3), allowing fish to occupy colder water than the other three zones during those months (Table 4). The average monthly depth of detections varied also slightly between years (Appendix D).

Because the vertical shift from peak depth usage to shallower water typically occurred mid-July, the average weekly depth was also estimated (Figure 4). The timing of peak weekly depth varied interannually occurring in mid-July during week 28 (average = 9.7 m; SE = 0.06) in 2020, week 26 (average = 9.5 m; SE = 0.03) in 2021, and week 27 (average = 9.1 m; SE = 0.07) in 2022 (Figure 5). Peak average weekly depth, and consequently transmitter temperature, also varied by reservoir zone and year (Figure 6–7). Fish were mainly detected in deeper cooler water in the Lower Forebay Zone during the summer weeks (Figure 6). In the Lower Forebay Zone peak average weekly depth occurred during week 32, or early August, in 2020 (average = 17.8 m; SE = 0.03), week 26, or late June, in 2021 (average = 11.4 m; SE = 0.07), and week 27, or early July, in 2022 (average = 12.5 m; SE = 0.12; Figure 6).

Hypolimnion use during summer, though limited, was most evident in the Lower Forebay Zone, but also occurred in the Upper Forebay and Middle Zones (Figures 8–9). Most Bodie Bass detections occurred in the epilimnion (<10 m of water), and fish generally avoided the metalimnion from June through August (i.e., during summer stratification; weeks 26–33; Figure 10). During this time, a subset of detections can be seen using the zone just below the metalimnion where oxygen increases (Figure 10). However, as stratification intensifies, and oxygen falls below 1.5–2.0 mg/L a shift occurs and detections in the hypolimnion greatly reduce (Figure 10). Hypolimnion use was less in 2021, and this shift was less pronounced. Fish also made quick dives into the hypolimnion (see Appendix E for examples) during the early summer, a behavior that was also greatly reduced when DO concentrations in the hypolimnion fell below 1.5–2.0 mg/L. Fish that did not emigrate after this threshold was reached typically suffered mortality (see Appendix E for an example). The frequency or duration of time spent at depth during these vertical migrations was not estimated.

Dissolved Oxygen and Temperature Tolerance. Pooled transmitter temperature data from all three years were used to determine temperature ranges during the summer months. The IQR, or the central 50% of data, increased as summer progressed ranging from 21.1 to 24.5 ˚C in June (average = 22.5 ˚C; SE = 0.01), 25.6 to 28.1 ˚C in July (average = 26.1 ˚C; SE = 0.01), and 27.2 to 28.7 ˚C in August (average = 27.8 ˚C; SE = 0.01; Table 4). In August, 95% of detections were below 29.7 ˚C. Average weekly transmitter temperatures peaked mid-August during week 33 in 2020 (average = 27.5 ˚C; SE = 0.03), 2021 (average = 28.2 ˚C; SE = 0.01), and in 2022 (average = 29.0 ˚C; SE = 0.02; Figure 5). The average monthly transmitter temperatures also varied by year (Appendix F) and zone (Table 4). Mainly, during summer months, the average weekly temperatures from detections in the Lower Forebay Zone were lower than the remaining three zones, and this difference was more pronounced in 2020 (Figure 7).

Paired detections containing DO values from the lower three zones (Middle, Upper Forebay, Lower Forebay Zones; n = 27,148) were used to assess DO use during the summer months (June–August). The average DO from paired detections varied by zone, month, and year

(Table 5). Overall, fish occupied the most oxygenated water in June (IQR = 5.4–8.4 mg/L; average = 7.3 mg/L; SE = 0.06) and the least oxygenated water in July (IQR = 2.0–5.3 mg/L; average = 3.7 mg/L; SE = 0.03; Figure 11). As fish utilized shallower water in late summer (August), the DO values from paired detections increased (IQR = 4.8–6.9 mg/L; average = 5.6 mg/L; SE = 0.01; Figure 11). The detections from the Lower Forebay Zone had the lowest average DO in July (IQR = 1.9–3.1 mg/L; average = 2.9 mg/L; SE = 0.03) and DO in the Lower Forebay Zone was lowest in July 2020 compared to 2021 and 2022 (Table 5). Most paired detections (95%) from the lower three zones were recorded at DO concentrations ≥ 1.3 mg/L in July and ≥ 1.6 mg/L in August. Most fish (95%) located during active tracking in summer months (June–August) throughout the entire reservoir were detected at DO concentrations greater than 2.0 mg/L and the IQR ranged from 4.5–6.4 mg/L. Average DO from active tracking re-locations was also lowest in July (4.9 mg/L; SE = 0.2).

Discussion

This is the first study to use transmitters with pressure and temperature sensors to track the seasonal distribution of Bodie Bass in a Southeastern reservoir. Bodie Bass exhibited seasonal horizontal and vertical distribution patterns. Similar to observations of Striped Bass (Bettinger 2015) and Bodie Bass (Hoffman et al. 2013) in previous studies, Bodie Bass in Lake Norman used the mouths of creeks more frequently in the spring and fall and were thus, located using shallower water in the spring and fall. Bodie Bass appeared to make a spawning migration into the Riverine Section of the reservoir when transmitters recorded temperatures of 15.2–18.6 ˚C. While migrations in an attempt to spawn have been observed (Phalen et al. 1988; Kilpatrick 2003), the optimal temperature range for spawning migrations of Bodie Bass has not been well studied. However, the range found in this study is similar to the optimum recommended range for Bodie Bass production in fish hatcheries (Harrell et al. 1990). Use of the Lower Forebay Zone (the zone closest to Cowans Ford Dam) was low overall and only increased during the early summer. Previous studies have also shown increased use of the lower zones in reservoirs during summer (Hoffman et al. 2013; Bettinger 2015). Additionally, the pressure transmitters used in this study showed that when Bodie Bass occupied the Lower Forebay Zone, hypolimnion use was minimal. This limited use of the hypolimnion in the Lower Forebay Zone in the summer appears to be a key difference compared to the previous distribution patterns of Striped Bass in Lake Norman (VanHorn et al. 1996), and in other reservoirs (Bettinger 2015; Schaffler et al. 2002). Instead, Bodie Bass exhibited a diving behavior which allowed them to limit their exposure to low-oxygenated water and once the hypolimnion became hypoxic, Bodie Bass largely avoided the metalimnion and hypolimnion. Use of other refuge areas during summer stratification was also observed. Similar to previous studies of Striped Bass (Bettinger 2015; Rabern 2022) and Bodie Bass (Bettinger 2015; Hoffman et al. 2013), Bodie Bass in Lake Norman sought refuge during late summer in the Riverine Section or in tributaries of the reservoir. These refuge areas are likely popular due to the availability of cooler, more oxygenated water (Coutant 1985; Young and Isely 2002). Overall, Bodie Bass and Striped Bass may exhibit some similar horizontal distribution patterns. However, differences in vertical distribution, especially during summer months, between the two species may be a key mechanism responsible for the increased survival of Bodie Bass.

Seasonal vertical distribution patterns were observed in this study. Water temperatures appeared to drive early summer vertical distribution, whereas DO appeared to drive late summer vertical distribution for telemetered Bodie Bass. In June, fish actively sought deeper, cooler water, and the IQR (21.1–24.5 °C) was within the preferred temperature range reported in Kilpatrick and Ney (21.5–25.5 °C; 2013). Thus, when DO was not a limiting factor (i.e., >4.5 mg/L), Bodie Bass selected cooler water within their preferred temperature range. By July, fish occupied water containing an average DO concentration of 3.7 mg/L, below their preferred DO concentration (i.e., <4.5; Kilpatrick and Ney 2013; Windham 1986; Muncy et al. 1990; Piner 1993; Douglas and Jahn 1987). Though the overall average temperature of detections in July (26.1 °C) exceeded the preferred temperature range, fish utilizing the Lower Forebay as refuge were located in an average water temperature (23.3 °C) which is within the preferred range. However, typically during late-July or early-August, when DO in the hypolimnion fell below a lower threshold (1.3–1.6 mg/L; this study), tagged fish selected for warmer water outside of their preferred range for more oxygenated water. For example, in August, the average temperature of all detections (27.8 °C) and detections only within the Lower Forebay Zone (27.2 °C) exceeded their maximum preferred temperature; however, the average DO for all three lower zones (5.6 mg/L) and the Lower Forebay Zone (5.5 mg/L) were within the preferred range of > 4.5 mg/L. In comparison, Striped Bass have been shown to prefer temperatures between 18.0 and 24.9 °C and to have less than 1 month survival at temperatures > 27.0 °C (Table 2). Bodie Bass in this study occupied temperatures greater than 26.0 °C (i.e., warmer than the preferred temperature range of Striped Bass) during late July through September. This increased thermal tolerance may allow Bodie Bass to vertically separate from Striped Bass, as seen by Kilpatrick and Ney (2013), when oxygen below the metalimnion became anoxic during mid-to-late summer.

The ability of Bodie Bass to vertically separate from Striped Bass may also be possible because of differences in prey preferences. In one eutrophic reservoir, when oxygen in the hypolimnion became hypoxic, Striped Bass occupied the oxycline (or the area just above the thermocline) with minimal impacts to growth and survival (Thompson et al. 2010). Thompson et al. (2010) also found that Striped Bass fed almost exclusively on pelagic clupeid species during the summer, despite other prey availability. In an oligotrophic system like Lake Norman, limited prey abundance and diet preferences of Striped Bass may impact their feeding behavior, forcing them to follow preferred prey into the hypolimnion when conditions are not ideal. Bodie Bass are more opportunistic feeders and may opportunistically forage on river herring in the hypolimnion during the summer. This is documented in this study as their diving behavior ceased when the prey species occupying the hypolimnion were no longer detected on hydroacoustic surveys (Duke Energy, personal communication). In contrast, Striped Bass have been shown to make quick trips in the opposite direction, traveling from the hypolimnion to the lower epilimnion to gain relief from hypoxic conditions (Rabern 2022). Overall, the increased thermal tolerance, opportunistic diets, and diving behavior allow Bodie Bass to make vertical shifts before prey and oxygen become unavailable in the hypolimnion, thereby reducing prolonged exposure to the hypoxic water in the hypolimnion. Future bioenergetic studies focusing on the differences and changes in diet of both species during critical summer weeks would help to further understand how diet preferences contribute to increased survival of Bodie Bass in the summer.

In this study, we also identified general DO and thermal tolerance ranges for Bodie Bass. In June, when DO was not a limiting factor in the hypolimnion (i.e., >4.5 mg/L), the preferred temperature range (i.e., the IQR) of Bodie Bass in Lake Norman was 21.1–24.5 °C. This estimated range is almost identical to the range reported in Kilpatrick and Ney (2013; 21.5–25.5 ˚C). Our range also aligned with ranges determined in other previous studies (summarized in Table 1). The preferred temperature range found in this study is higher than the preferred temperature range of Striped Bass (summarized in Table 2). The upper thermal tolerance of these fish appeared to be between 29.2 and 29.6 ˚C (the temperature at which 95% of detections were observed in July and August), which is within the range of the thermal maximums found by Piner (1993; 27.1–32.0 ˚C). When selecting water with higher DO concentrations in August, the preferred DO range was 4.8–6.9 mg/L, which supports previous findings that DO concentrations >4.5 mg/L are preferred by Bodie Bass (Table 1). Not unlike Striped Bass, DO concentrations below 2.0 mg/L were largely avoided (Kilpatrick and Ney 2013). However, this study indicates that Bodie Bass might be more tolerant of minimum DO levels than previously thought. When detections from 2020 to 2022 during July and August are pooled, the DO threshold for Bodie Bass in Lake Norman appears to be between 1.3 and 1.6 mg/L, as 95% of detections were observed above these DO concentrations in July and August, respectively. While the oxygen demands for both species are thought to be similar, Bodie Bass in this study appeared to utilize and survive in water with less than 2.0 mg/L of DO. However, the extent of the use of low-oxygenated water was not analyzed in this study and the length of time spent at depths with DO < 2.0 mg/L is not known.

Although the data collected in this study was substantial and produced a robust dataset, there were a few factors that limited the results. First, limited reservoir profile data that varied in frequency based on station location and year reduced the number of possible paired detections. Ultimately, the thermal and DO tolerance estimates could be improved in future studies by conducting weekly reservoir profiles at fixed stations throughout the entire reservoir during summer months. Also, active tracking was mainly used to identify mortalities and recover transmitters. Data collected through active tracking efforts could have been improved by recording temperature and DO profiles for the entire water column at observed fish locations or at receiver stations. This would have allowed us to determine available habitat and habitat selection during the summer. Secondly, differences in habitat selection based on capture location for Striped Bass have been found in several studies (Bettinger 2015; Jackson and Hightower 2001). Site affinity or interannual differences in distribution and habitat use could have been distinguished if the initial capture location of each fish had been recorded.

Overall, it appears that differences in fish physiology (i.e., thermal and DO tolerances) and behavioral advantages likely contribute to the differences observed between Striped Bass and Bodie Bass summer survival in Lake Norman. This study provided vertical and horizontal distribution data for Bodie Bass over three summers and demonstrated that Bodie Bass are an excellent candidate for biologists wanting to stock temperate basses when suitable habitat is limited for Striped Bass or when certain cool-water prey species are present. This study demonstrates that Bodie Bass can generally survive and even thrive in shallow, warmer water for prolonged periods, and are thus, not as limited by suitable summer habitat availability.

Management Recommendations

1. Continue to stock Bodie Bass in Lake Norman at the current rate of 24 fish/ha. Monitor changes in the population every 3 to 5 years.
2. Maintain the current regulations on Lake Norman.
3. Use telemetry data to estimate monthly mortality, quantify vertical movement patterns, and build a model to test for significant differences in vertical and temporal distribution patterns.

Acknowledgments

This project was no simple task and required long hours and devotion from many NCWRC employees, including but not limited to Lawrence Dorsey, Corey Oakley, Casey Joubert, Rick Bradford, Troy Thompson, Seth Mycko, David Belkoski, and Carson Pope. We would not have been able to capture and tag fish as easily as we did without the help of Kim Baker and his selfless dedication to this project. A special thanks to Duke Energy for purchasing the radio transmitters which allowed biologists to locate individual fish more easily.

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TABLE 1. General reservoir summer habitat suitability categories for adult Bodie Bass using temperature and dissolved oxygen combinations (DO). Bodie Bass will occupy “Preferred” habitat if it is available, “Good” habitat is adequate for the survival of Bodie Bass, and “No Habitat” is outside of the habitat requirements for Bodie Bass. Generalizations from previous studies were made to create suitability categories for this table (Douglas and Jahn 1987; Kilpatrick and Ney 2013; Muncy et al. 1990; Piner 1993, Windham 1986).

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">DO (mg/L)</th><th colspan="4">Temperature (°C)</th></tr>
<tr><th><21.0</th><th>21.0–27.0</th><th>27.1–32.0</th><th>>32.0</th></tr>
<tr><td>>=4.5</td><td>Good</td><td>Preferred</td><td>Good</td><td rowspan="3">No Habitat</td></tr>
<tr><td>2.0–4.4</td><td>Good</td><td>Good</td><td>Good</td></tr>
<tr><td><2.0</td><td colspan="3">No Habitat</td></tr>
</table>

TABLE 2. General reservoir summer habitat categories for adult (≥270 mm TL) Striped Bass using temperature and dissolved oxygen (DO) combinations. Striped Bass will occupy “Preferred” habitat if it is available, “Good” habitat is adequate for survival of Striped Bass, “<1 Month Survival” conditions may be fatal after one month, and “No Habitat” is outside of the habitat requirements for Striped Bass. Generalizations from studies summarized in Coutant (2013) were made to create suitability categories for this table.

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">DO (mg/L)</th><th colspan="5">Temperature (°C)</th></tr>
<tr><th><18.0</th><th>18.0–24.9</th><th>25.0–26.9</th><th>27.0–29.0</th><th>>29.0</th></tr>
<tr><td>>=4.0</td><td>Good</td><td>Preferred</td><td>Good</td><td rowspan="2"><1 Month Survival</td><td rowspan="3">No Habitat</td></tr>
<tr><td>2.0–3.9</td><td>Good</td><td>Good</td><td>Good</td></tr>
<tr><td><=2.0</td><td colspan="4">No Habitat</td></tr>
</table>

TABLE 3. Pooled average monthly depth (m) of fish detected on all receivers by reservoir zone from May 2020 to November 2022.

	Lower Forebay		Upper Forebay		Middle		Upper		Grand Total	
	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE
January	8.2	0.16	7.1	0.0	5.6	0.0	3.9	0.0	5.7	0.01
February	4.6	0.08	7.2	0.0	6.7	0.0	3.9	0.0	6.3	0.01
March	5.0	0.11	3.4	0.0	5.1	0.0	2.1	0.0	3.6	0.01
April	4.8	0.12	3.0	0.0	2.3	0.0	1.7	0.0	2.2	0.01
May	5.7	0.08	4.1	0.0	4.5	0.0	4.3	0.0	4.3	0.01
June	10.0	0.04	8.5	0.0	7.5	0.0	6.5	0.0	7.9	0.01
July	10.8	0.04	8.4	0.0	7.5	0.0	5.6	0.0	7.9	0.01
August	7.9	0.04	6.8	0.0	6.9	0.0	4.4	0.0	6.2	0.01
September	6.4	0.05	5.3	0.0	6.0	0.0	3.4	0.0	4.9	0.01
October	3.6	0.11	2.2	0.0	6.6	0.0	4.9	0.0	4.7	0.02
November	4.0	0.12	4.1	0.0	5.0	0.0	3.4	0.0	4.4	0.01
December	3.8	0.13	7.6	0.0	4.7	0.0	3.7	0.0	5.2	0.01
Grand Total	8.4	0.02	6.0	0.0	6.0	0.0	4.0	0.0	5.6	0.00

TABLE 4. Pooled average monthly temperature (˚C) of fish detected on all receivers by reservoir zone from May 2020 to November 2022.

	Lower Forebay		Upper Forebay		Middle		Upper		Grand Total	
	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE
January	11.1	0.0	10.8	0.0	10.5	0.0	9.4	0.0	10.3	0.01
February	11.7	0.1	9.3	0.0	8.5	0.0	7.6	0.0	8.7	0.00
March	14.0	0.1	12.6	0.0	12.0	0.0	12.9	0.0	12.5	0.01
April	16.3	0.1	16.7	0.0	16.9	0.0	16.4	0.0	16.6	0.01
May	21.2	0.0	21.9	0.0	21.7	0.0	20.9	0.0	21.6	0.01
June	20.5	0.0	21.7	0.0	23.1	0.0	23.8	0.0	22.5	0.01
July	23.2	0.0	26.5	0.0	26.7	0.0	27.2	0.0	26.1	0.01
August	27.2	0.0	28.5	0.0	28.1	0.0	27.2	0.0	27.8	0.01
September	26.2	0.0	26.8	0.0	26.6	0.0	26.0	0.0	26.4	0.00
October	23.6	0.0	22.9	0.0	22.6	0.0	21.8	0.0	22.4	0.01
November	19.3	0.1	16.8	0.0	17.1	0.0	16.1	0.0	16.8	0.01
December	14.7	0.1	13.3	0.0	12.8	0.0	12.3	0.0	12.8	0.00
Grand Total	22.9	0.0	19.2	0.0	18.4	0.0	20.1	0.0	19.3	0.01

TABLE 5. Dissolved oxygen concentrations (mg/L) from paired detection data in the lower three zones (Lower Forebay Zone, Upper Forebay Zone, Middle Zone).

		2020		2021		2022		Total	
		Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE
Lower Forebay	June	7.9	0.1	-	-	5.9	0.1	7.5	0.1
	July	2.4	0.0	4.1	0.1	3.5	0.1	2.9	0.0
	August	3.0	0.1	6.3	0.0	4.1	0.1	5.5	0.0
Upper Forebay	June	-	-	-	-	5.9	0.2	5.9	0.2
	July	-	-	-	-	6.6	0.1	6.6	0.1
	August	6.2	0.0	6.1	0.0	6.0	0.1	6.1	0.0
Middle	June	-	-	-	-	7.8	0.2	7.8	0.2
	July	4.2	0.1	4.4	0.1	5.1	0.1	4.5	0.0
	August	4.3	0.0	5.8	0.0	5.5	0.1	5.5	0.0
All lower zones	June	7.9	0.06	-	-	6.3	0.10	7.3	0.06
	July	2.8	0.04	4.4	0.05	4.3	0.06	3.7	0.03
	August	4.3	0.03	6.0	0.01	5.3	0.05	5.6	0.01

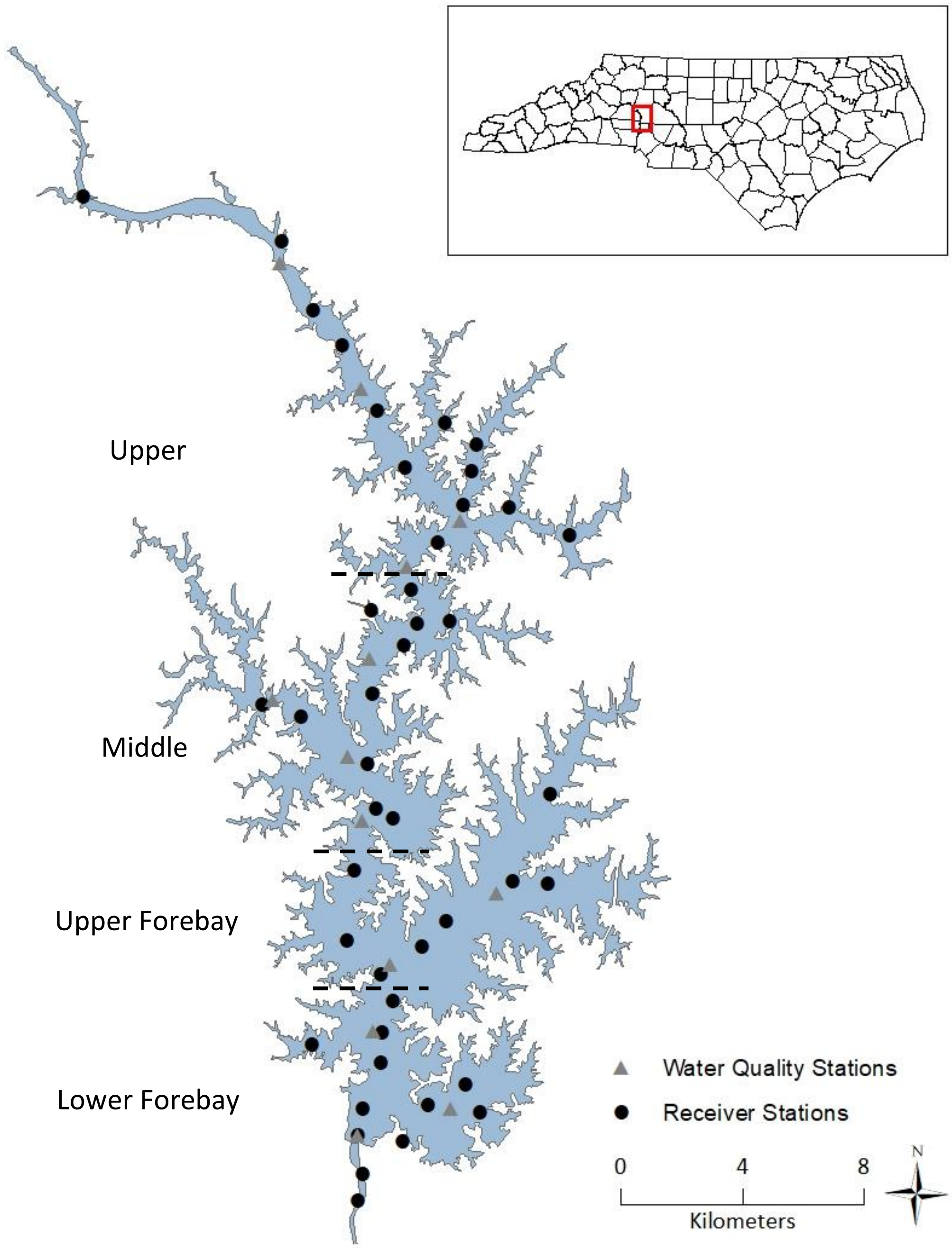


FIGURE 1. Receiver, water quality station locations, and the delineation of the four reservoir zones in Lake Norman (Lower Forebay Zone, Upper Forebay Zone, Middle Zone, and Upper Zone).

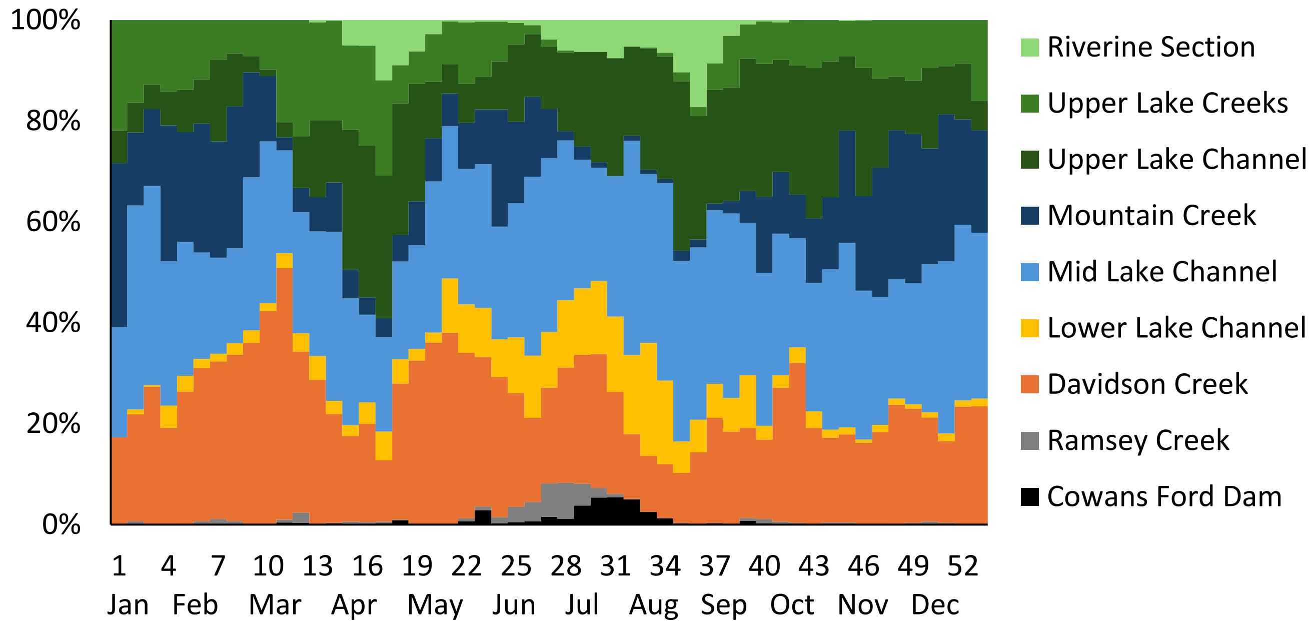


FIGURE 2. Percentage of fish detections on receivers by week and area from 2020, 2021, and 2022 combined. The approximate month is also included for reference.

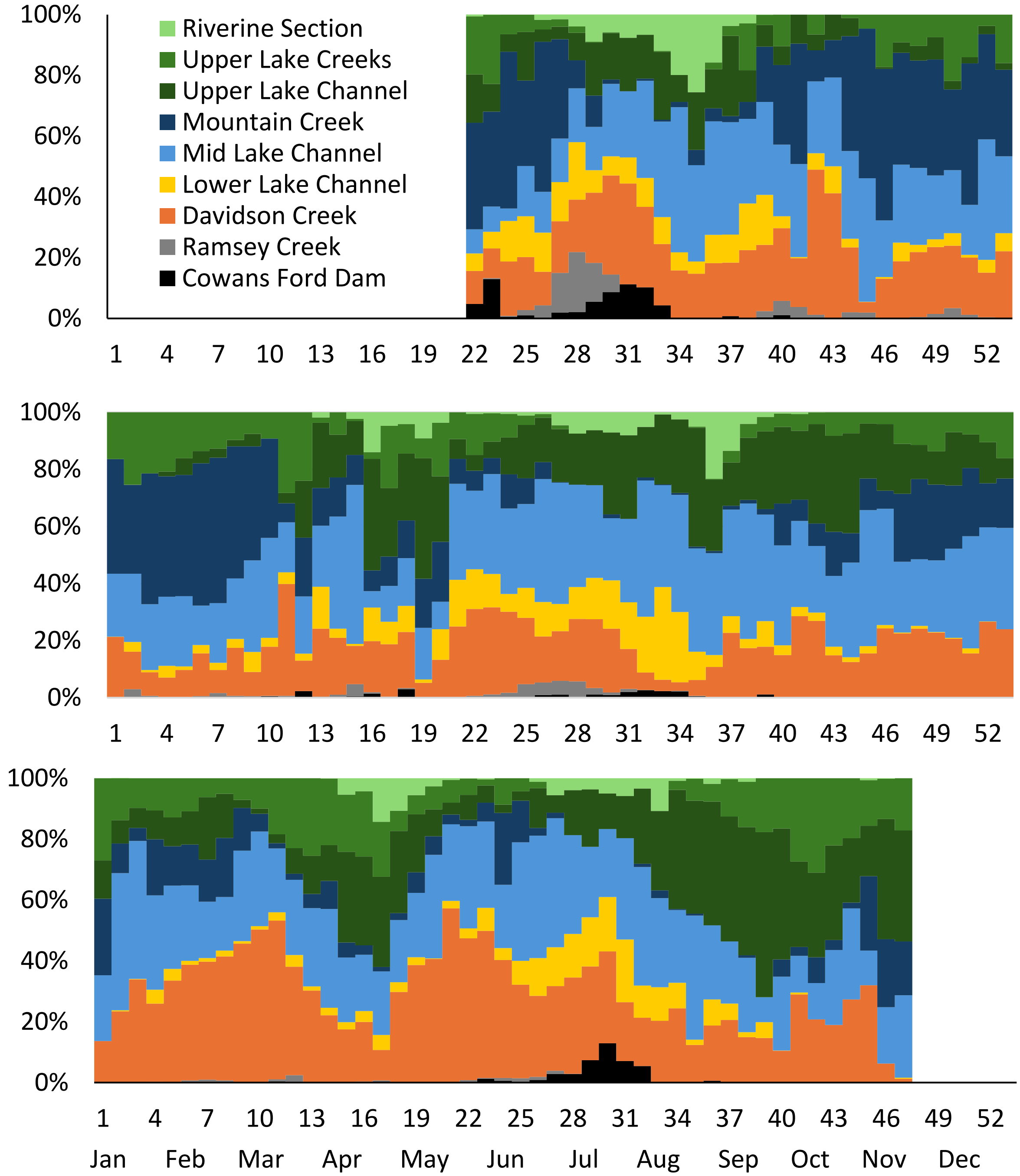


FIGURE 3. Percentage of receiver detections by week and reservoir area in 2020 (top), 2021 (middle), and 2022 (bottom). The approximate month is also included for reference.

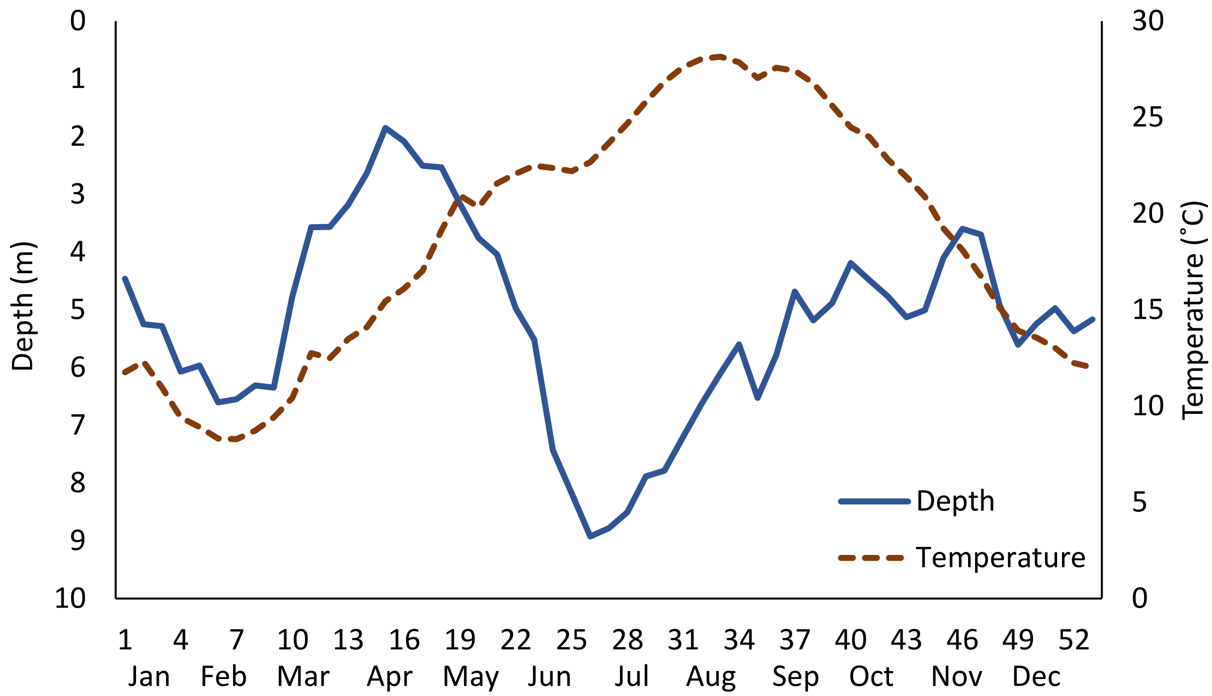


FIGURE 4. Weekly pooled average depth (m) and temperature (˚C) of fish detected on receivers from 2020, 2021, and 2022.

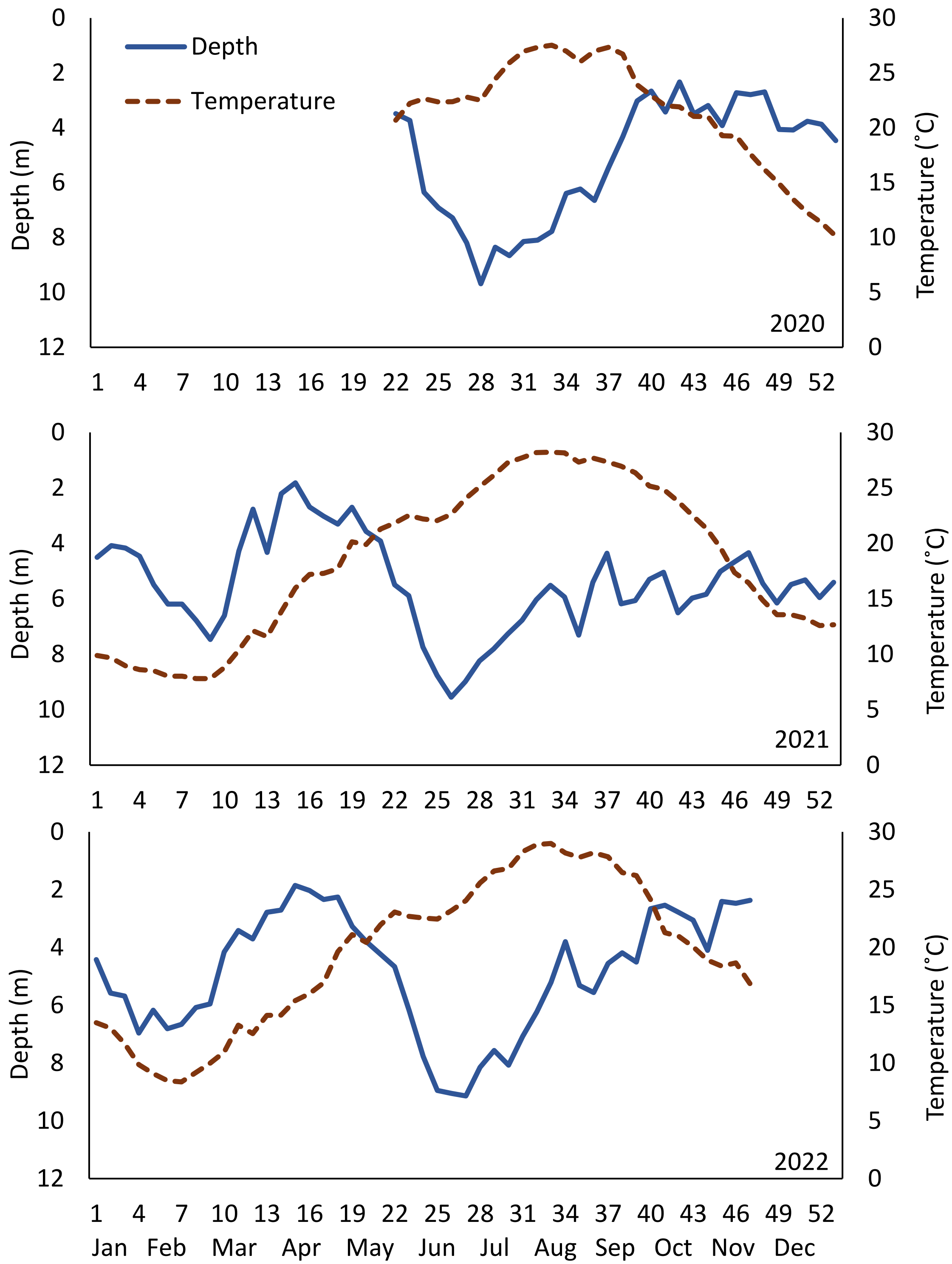


FIGURE 5. Weekly average depth (m) and temperature (˚C) for fish detected on receivers in 2020 (top), 2021 (middle), and 2022 (bottom).

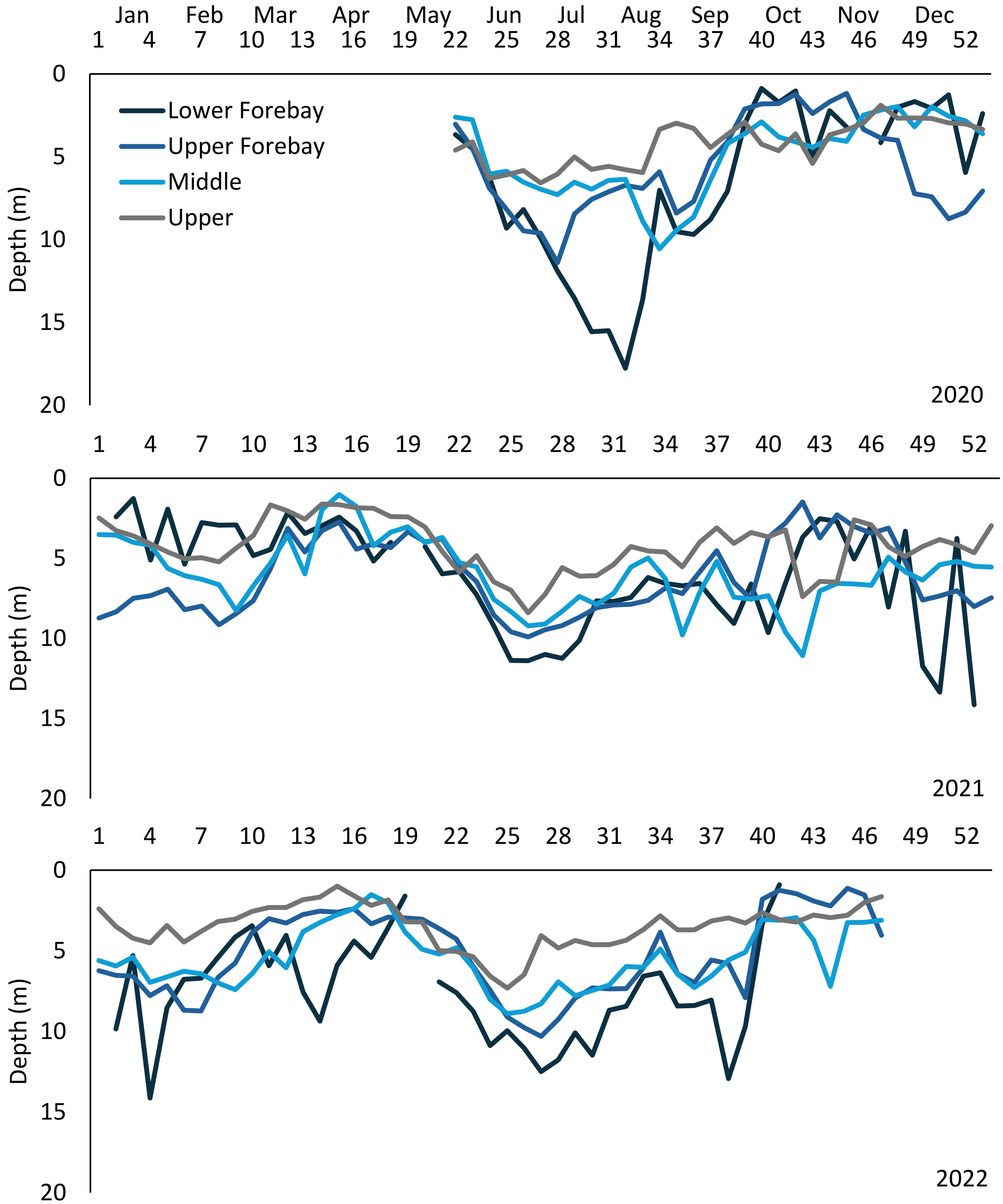


FIGURE 6. Weekly average depth (m) by zone for 2020, 2021, and 2022.

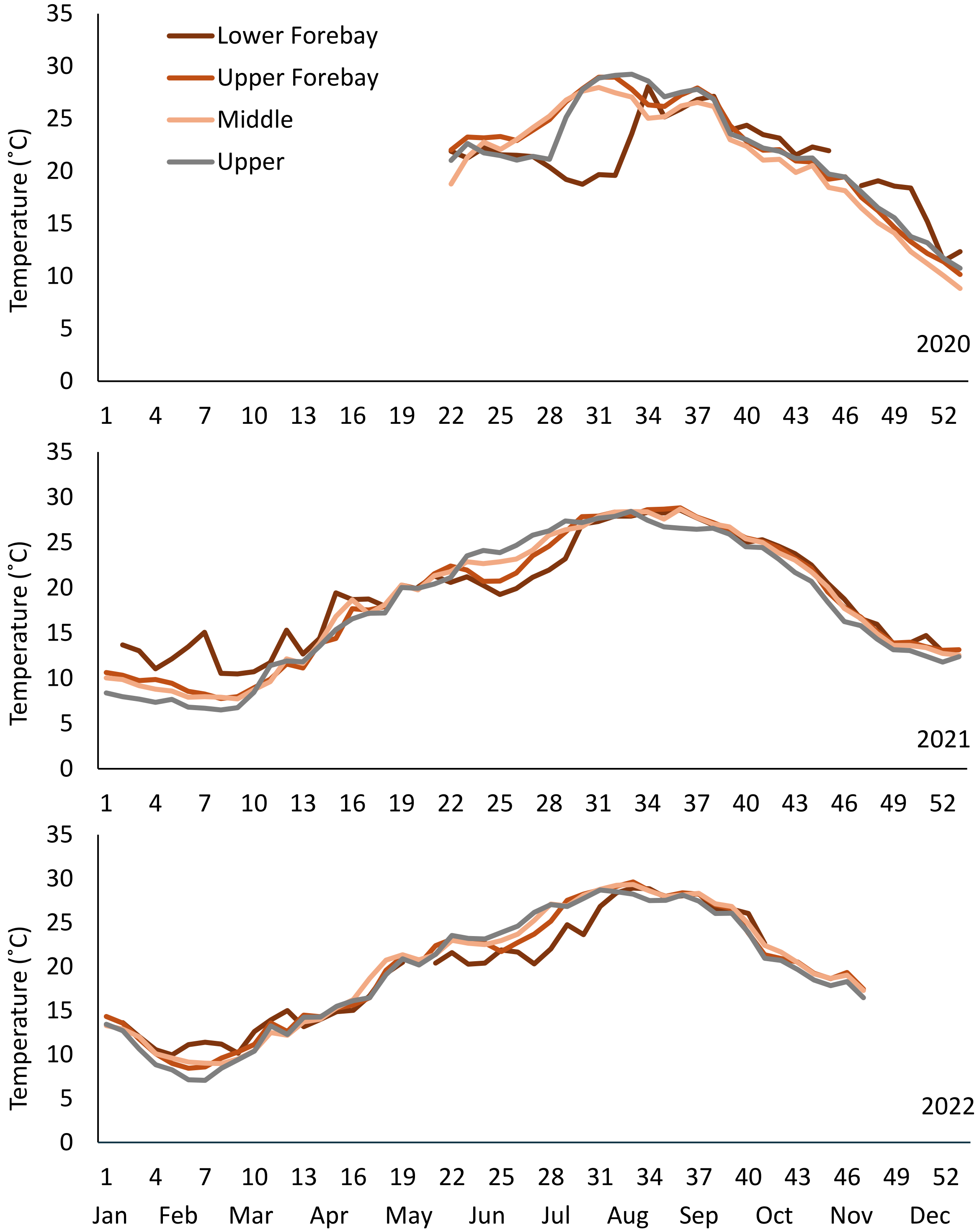


FIGURE 7. Weekly average temperature (˚C) by zone for 2020 (top), 2021 (middle), and 2022 (bottom).

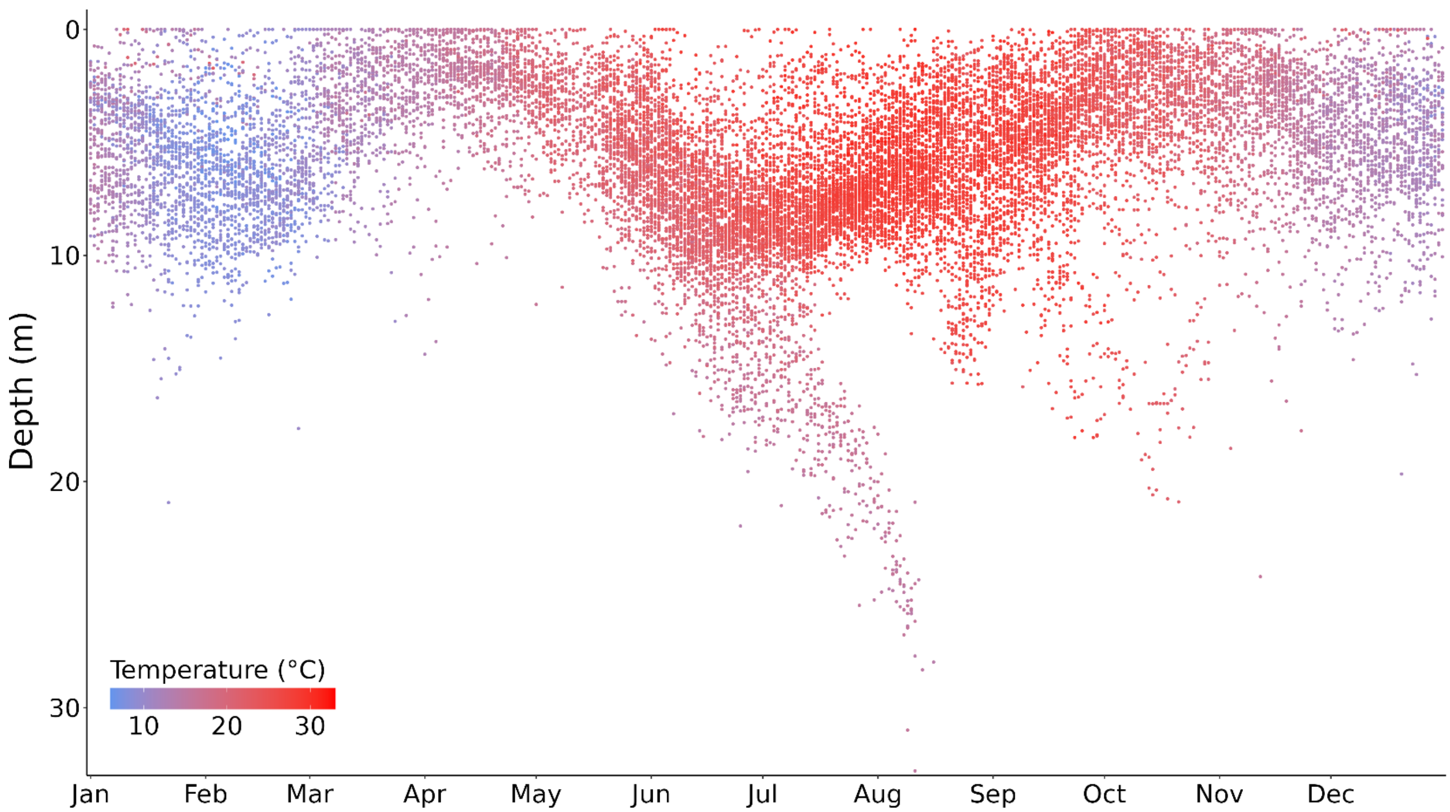


FIGURE 8. Average daily temperature (˚C) and depth (m) of individual fish from January through December in 2020–2022.

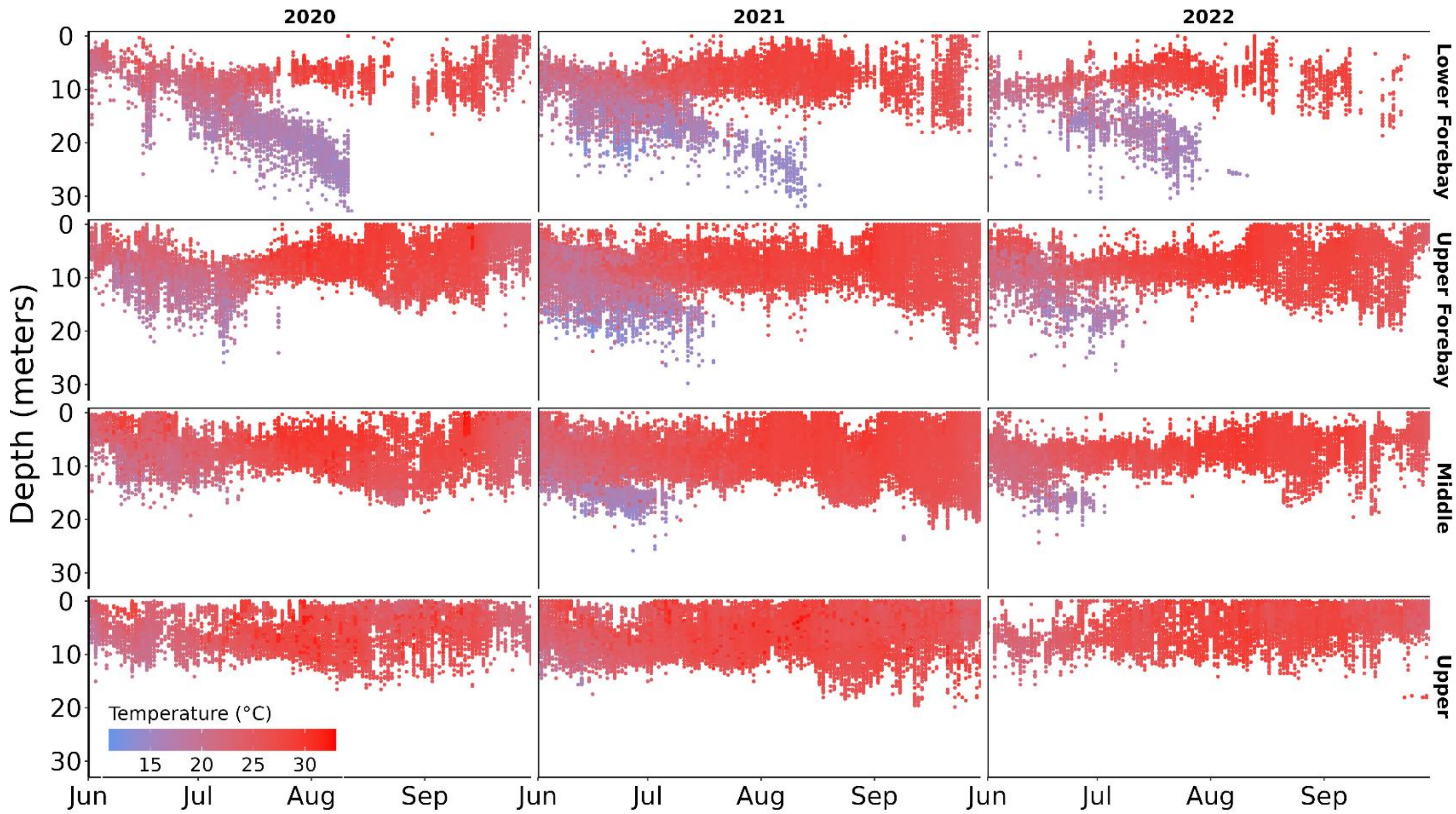


FIGURE 9. Temperature (˚C) and depth (m) detections of individual fish by zone from 2020–2022.

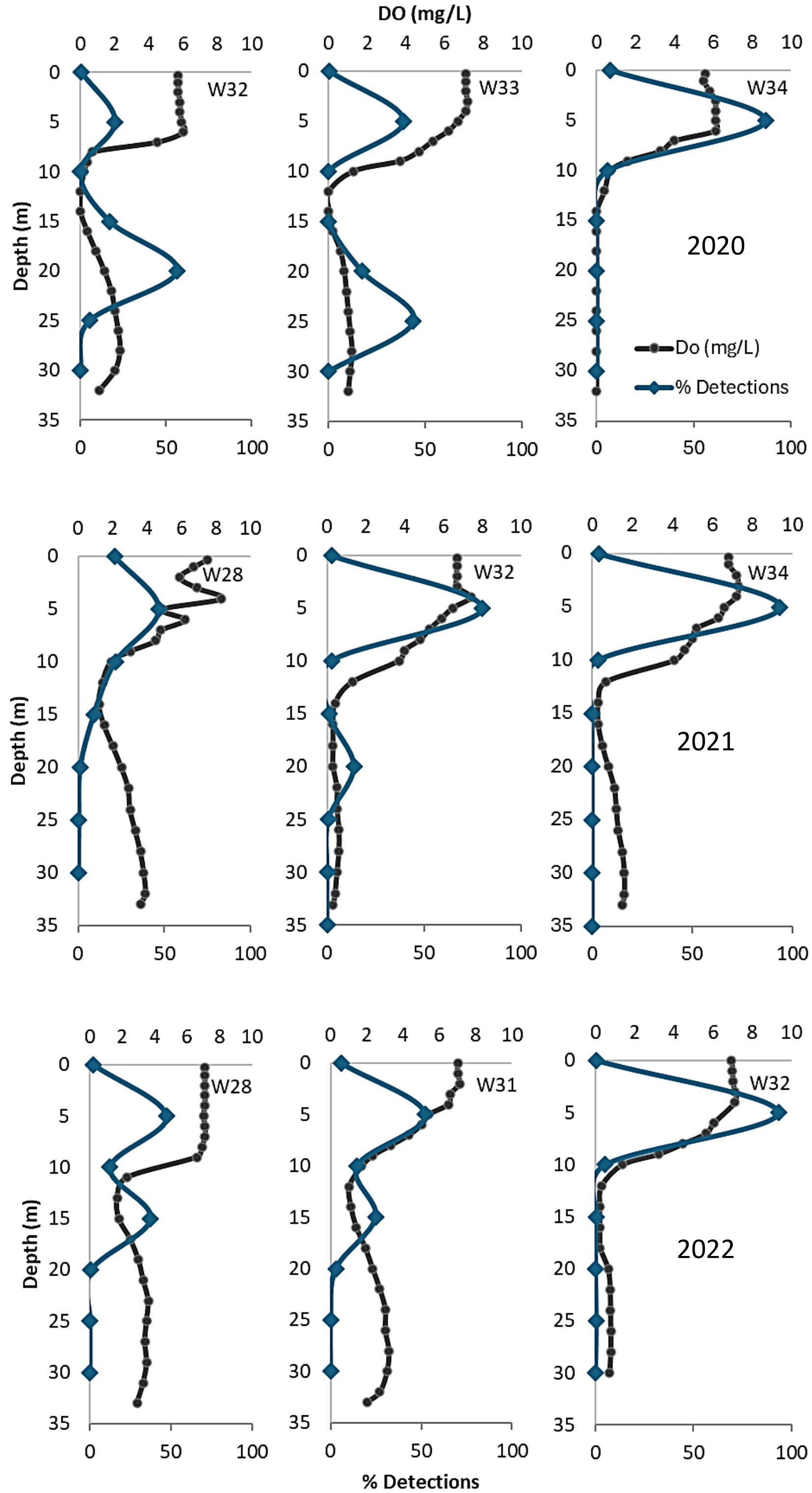


FIGURE 10. Dissolved Oxygen profiles of Duke Energy Water Quality Station 1.0 in 2020 (top), 2021 (middle), and 2022 (bottom) during progressive weeks in late summer. The percentage of fish detected on receivers WQ1, 1, 1A, and 2A at 5 m intervals is also shown.

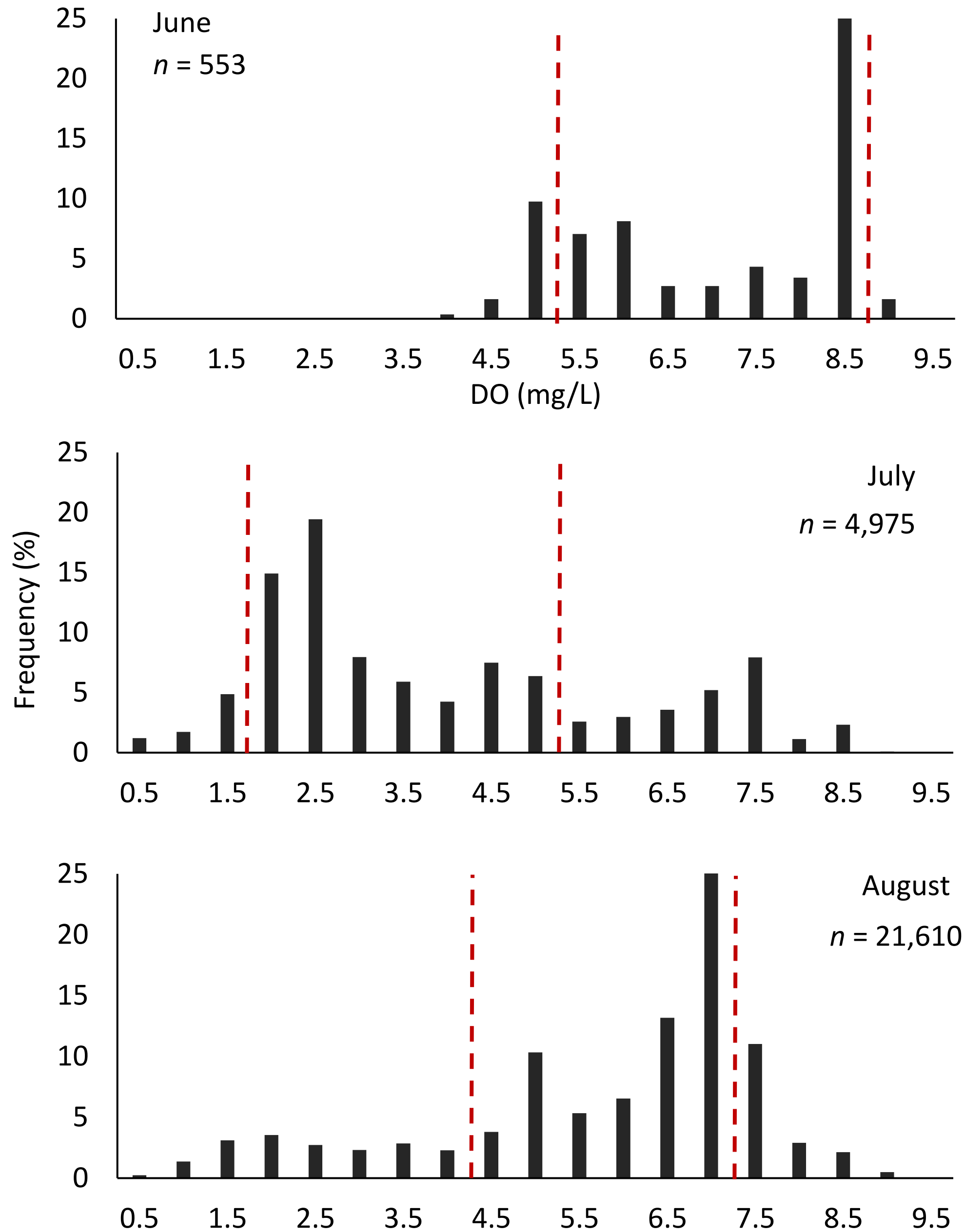


FIGURE 11. Pooled frequency distribution of fish detections in the Lower Forebay Zone, Upper Forebay Zone, and Middle Zone at varying dissolved oxygen (DO) concentrations during June (top), July (middle), and August (bottom). The IQR, or the middle 50^{th} quartile of data, is contained within the dotted red lines.

Appendix A. Receiver Station Information

Table A.1. Station ID, Reservoir Zone, Reservoir Area, and GPS coordinates for receivers.

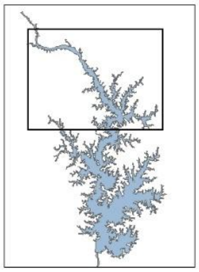
Station ID	Reservoir Zone	Reservoir Area	Latitude	Longitude
MIL1	Downstream of Dam	Downstream of Dam	35.4260	–80.9551
MIL2	Downstream of Dam	Downstream of Dam	35.4182	–80.9568
WQ1	Lower Forebay	Cowans Ford Dam	35.4376	–80.9571
1	Lower Forebay	Cowans Ford Dam	35.4455	–80.9555
MNS Discharge	Lower Forebay	MNS Discharge	35.4359	–80.9409
R2	Lower Forebay	Ramsey Creek	35.4467	–80.9321
R3	Lower Forebay	Ramsey Creek	35.4531	–80.9187
R4	Lower Forebay	Ramsey Creek	35.4450	–80.9129
1A	Lower Forebay	Lower Lake Channel	35.4590	–80.9493
L1	Lower Forebay	Little Creek	35.4640	–80.9743
2	Lower Forebay	Lower Lake Channel	35.4681	–80.9492
2A	Lower Forebay	Lower Lake Channel	35.4774	–80.9455
T3	Upper Forebay	Davidson Creek	35.5129	–80.8901
D2	Upper Forebay	Davidson Creek	35.4640	–80.9743
D3	Upper Forebay	Davidson Creek	35.4935	–80.9351
D5	Upper Forebay	Davidson Creek	35.5014	–80.9266
D8	Upper Forebay	Davidson Creek	35.5136	–80.9029
D10	Upper Forebay	Davidson Creek	35.5393	–80.8899
3	Upper Forebay	Lower Lake Channel	35.4850	–80.9498
5	Upper Forebay	Mid Lake Channel	35.4949	–80.9626
7	Upper Forebay	Mid Lake Channel	35.5157	–80.9605
NML	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	35.5314	–80.9468
10	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	35.5342	–80.9528
12	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	35.5475	–80.9562
M3	Middle	Mountain Creek	35.5608	–80.9807
M5	Middle	Mountain Creek	35.5641	–80.9948
14	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	35.5682	–80.9548
16	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	35.5826	–80.9439
15A	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	35.5891	–80.9392
MSS Discharge	Middle	MSS Discharge	35.5930	–80.9562
MC1	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	35.5899	–80.9274
17A	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	35.5991	–80.9417

Appendix A. Continued

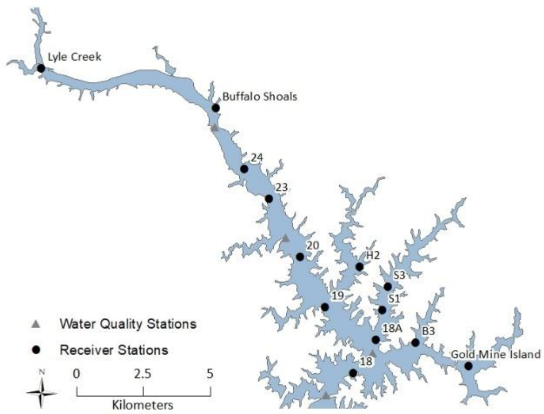
Table A.1. Station ID, Reservoir Zone, Reservoir Area, and GPS coordinates for receivers.

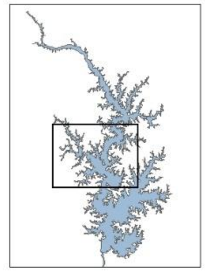
Station ID	Reservoir Zone	Reservoir Area	Latitude	Longitude
18	Upper	Upper Lake Channel	35.6131	–80.9324
B3	Upper	Upper Lake Creeks	35.6239	–80.9069
Gold Mine Island (GMI)	Upper	Upper Lake Creeks	35.6163	–80.8847
S1	Upper	Upper Lake Creeks	35.6346	–80.9208
S3	Upper	Upper Lake Creeks	35.6426	–80.9189
18A	Upper	Upper Lake Channel	35.6246	–80.9233
H2	Upper	Upper Lake Creeks	35.6489	–80.9305
19	Upper	Upper Lake Channel	35.6353	–80.9446
20	Upper	Upper Lake Channel	35.6520	–80.9551
23	Upper	Upper Lake Channel	35.6712	–80.9686
24	Upper	Upper Lake Channel	35.6811	–80.9790
Buffalo Shoals	Upper	Riverine Section	35.7014	–80.9911
Lyle Creek (LC)	Upper	Riverine Section	35.7135	–81.0635

Appendix B. Receiver Locations by Zone

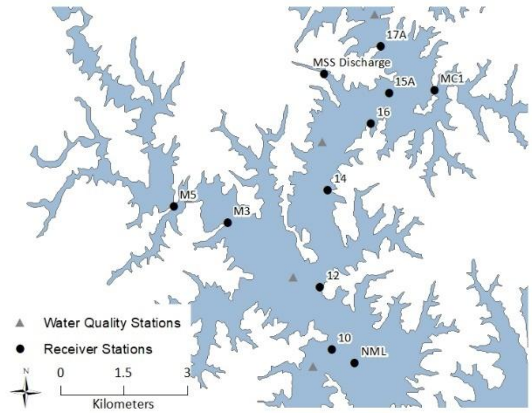


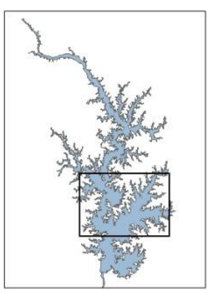
Upper Zone



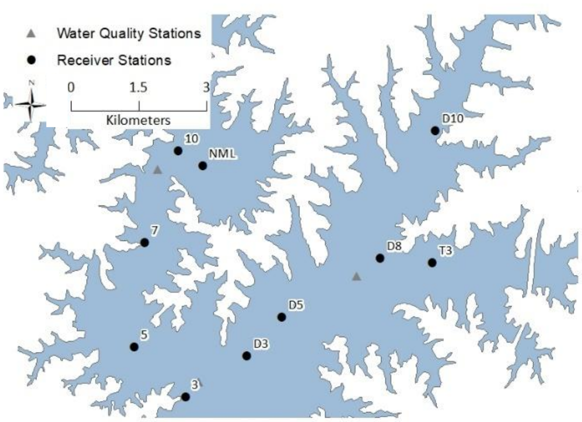


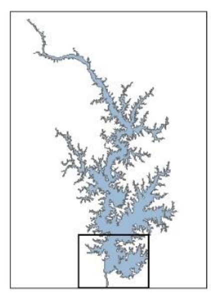
Middle Zone



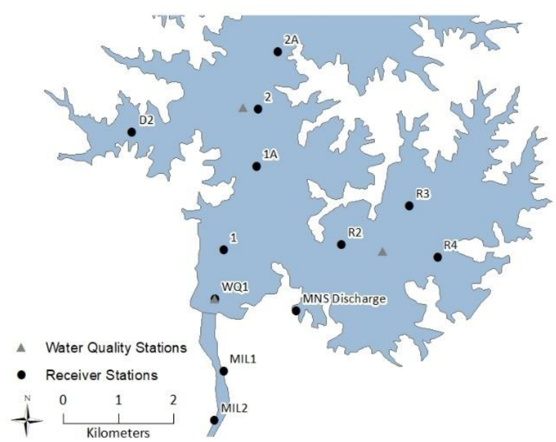


Middle Forebay Zone





Lower Forebay Zone



Appendix C. Water Quality Station Information

Table C.1. Station IDs with respective reservoir zones, reservoir areas, and receivers that were within 1,500 m.

Station ID	Lat	Long	Reservoir Zone	Reservoir Area	Receiver ID
82BB	35.4374	–80.9564	Lower Forebay	Dam	WQ, 1
1	35.4376	–80.9571	Lower Forebay	Dam	WQ, 1
5	35.4458	–80.9237	Lower Forebay	Ramsey Creek	R2, R3, R4
7.5	35.4683	–80.9522	Lower Forebay	Lower Lake channel	1A, 2, 2A
82R	35.4869	–80.9415	Upper Forebay	Lower Lake channel	D2, D3, 3, 5
8	35.4880	–80.9465	Upper Forebay	Lower Lake Channel	D8, T3
9.5	35.5098	–80.9085	Upper forebay	Davidson Creek	D2, D3, 3, 5
11	35.5305	–80.9576	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	10, NML
11.5	35.5495	–80.9633	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	12
12.5	35.5657	–80.9909	Middle	Mountain Creek	M3,M5
82M	35.5660	–80.9903	Middle	Mountain Creek	M3, M5
13	35.5784	–80.9562	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	14, 16
82B	35.6056	–80.9438	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	17A, 18
15	35.6058	–80.9432	Middle	Mid Lake Channel	17A, 18
15.9	35.6199	–80.9244	Upper	Upper Lake Channel	18, 18A
62	35.6584	–80.9613	Upper	Upper Lake Channel	23, 20
79A	35.6950	–80.9912	Upper	Riverine Section	Riverine Section

Appendix D. Monthly Average Depth

Table D.1. Monthly average depth (m) and standard error (SE) of all fish detected on receivers in 2020, 2021, 2022, and all years combined (excludes receivers near discharge water).

	2020		2021		2022		All Years	
	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE
January			4.6	0.01	6.1	0.01	5.7	0.01
February			6.6	0.01	6.2	0.01	6.3	0.01
March			4.6	0.03	3.4	0.01	3.6	0.01
April			2.8	0.03	2.1	0.01	2.2	0.01
May	3.6	0.04	4.7	0.02	4.0	0.02	4.3	0.01
June	6.5	0.02	8.3	0.02	8.5	0.03	7.9	0.01
July	8.6	0.03	7.6	0.01	7.8	0.03	7.9	0.01
August	7.1	0.03	6.2	0.01	5.0	0.02	6.2	0.01
September	4.5	0.02	5.3	0.02	4.2	0.02	4.9	0.01
October	3.0	0.02	5.7	0.03	3.0	0.02	4.7	0.02
November	3.0	0.02	5.2	0.02	2.5	0.03	4.4	0.01
December	4.0	0.02	5.6	0.01			5.2	0.01

Appendix E. Examples of Fish Behavior

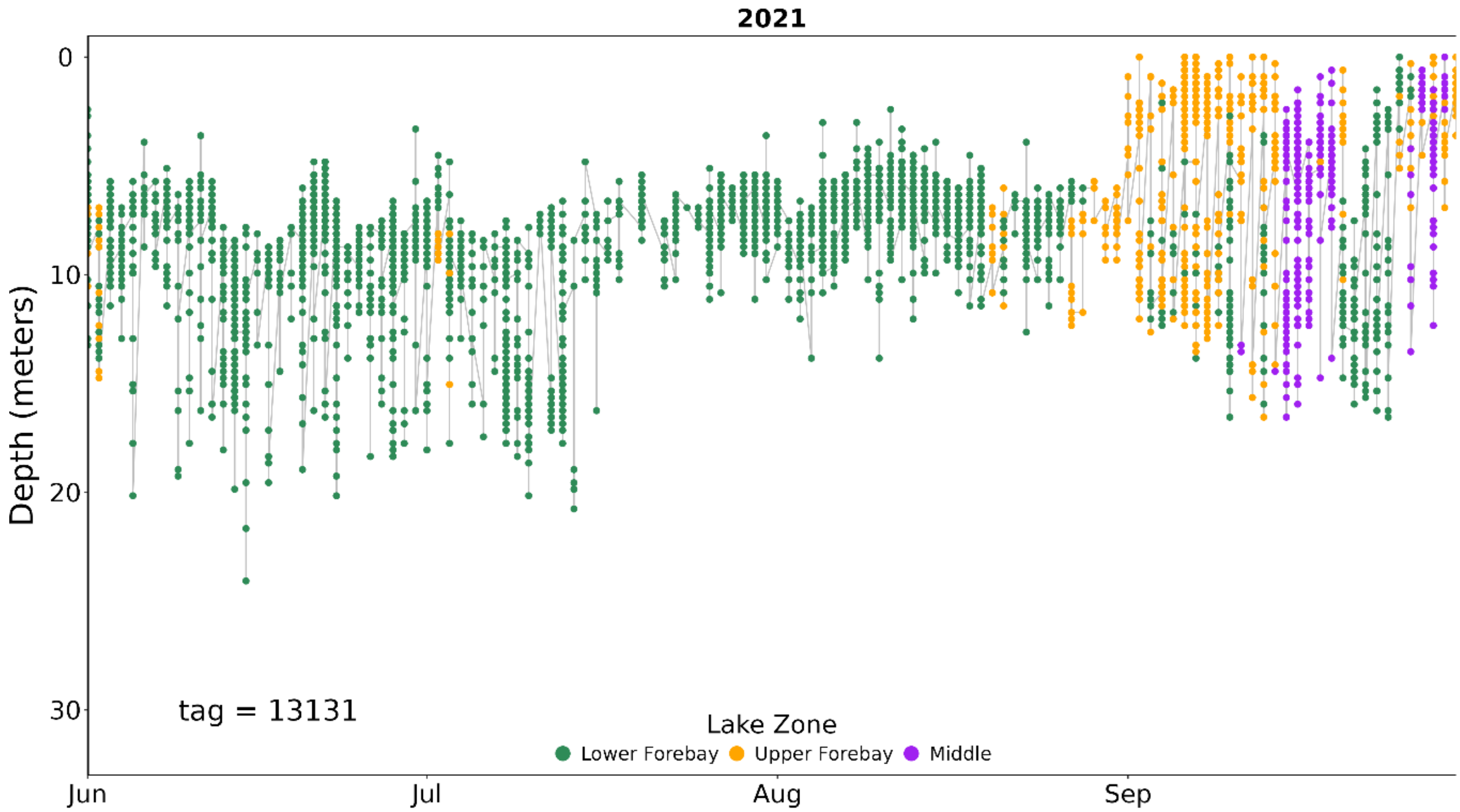


FIGURE E.1.Individual 13131 dives into the hypolimnion (i.e., >10 m) until mid-July. They remain in the epilimnion near the oxycline until September when they begin to use multiple zones and depths within the epilimnion and hypolimnion.

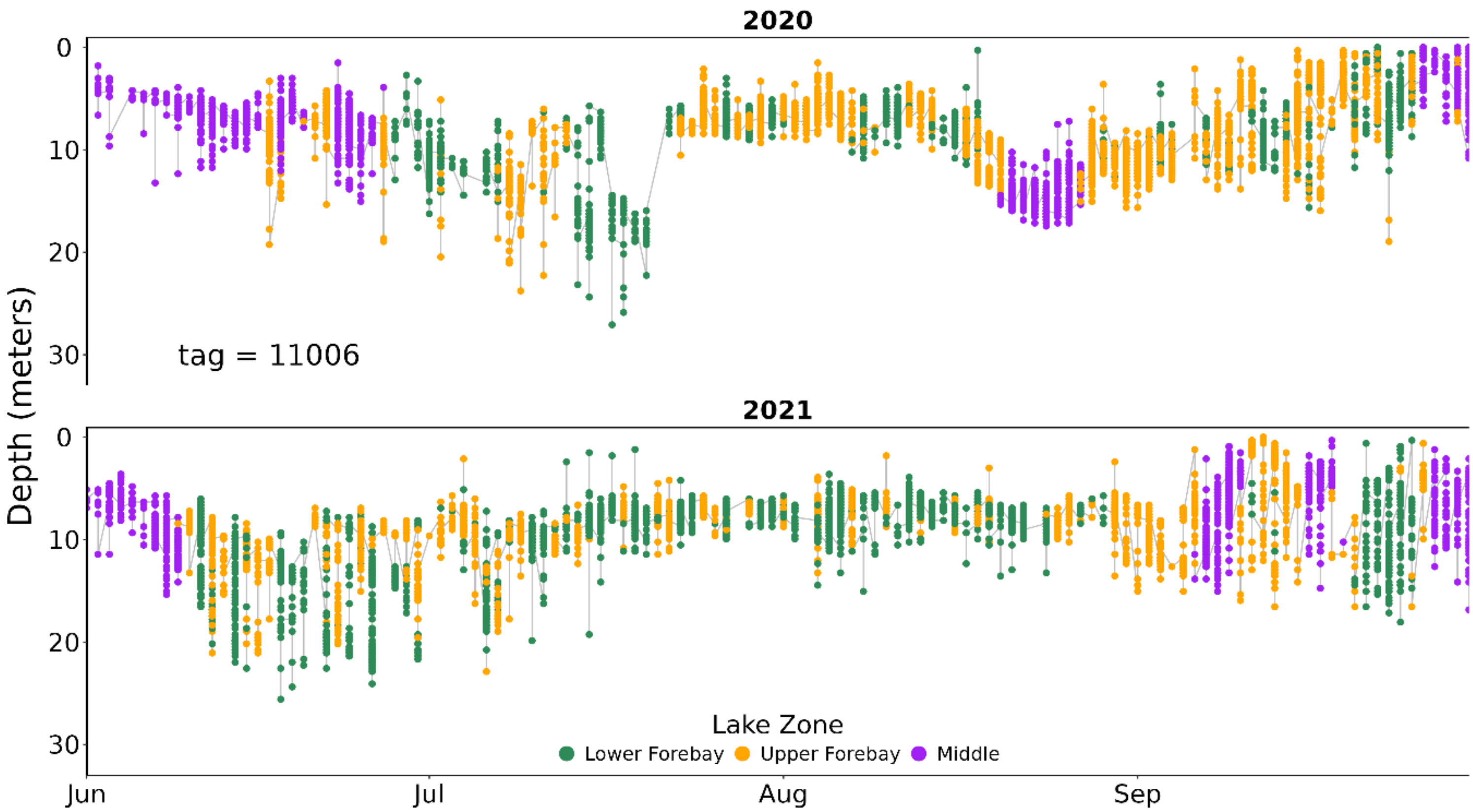


FIGURE E.2. Individual 11006 dives into the hypolimnion (i.e., >10 m) until mid-July. They remain in the epilimnion near the oxycline until September when they begin to use multiple zones and depths within the epilimnion and hypolimnion.

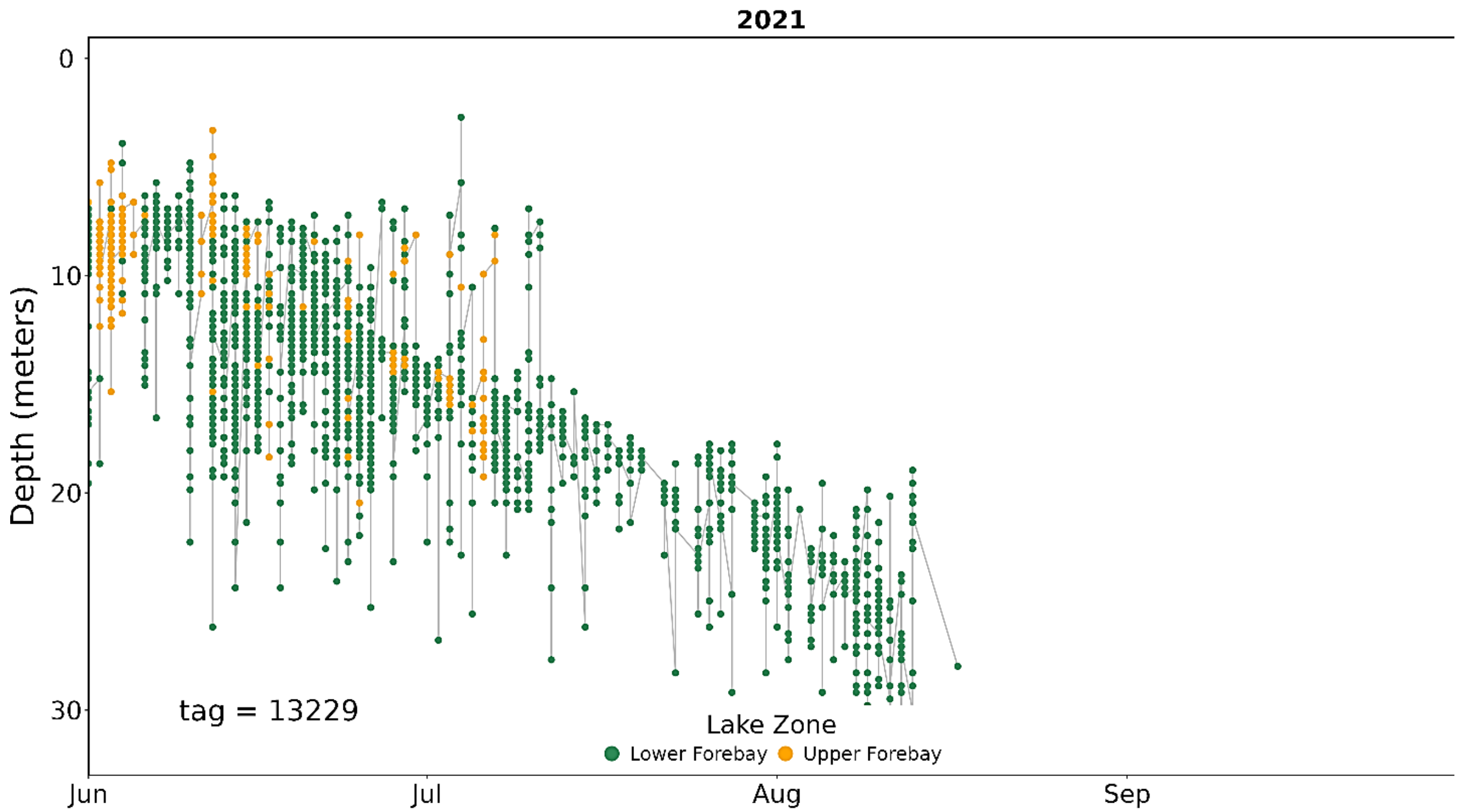


FIGURE E.3. Individual 13229 dives within the hypolimnion and progressively utilizes deeper water until they suffered a mortality event mid-July and were censored.

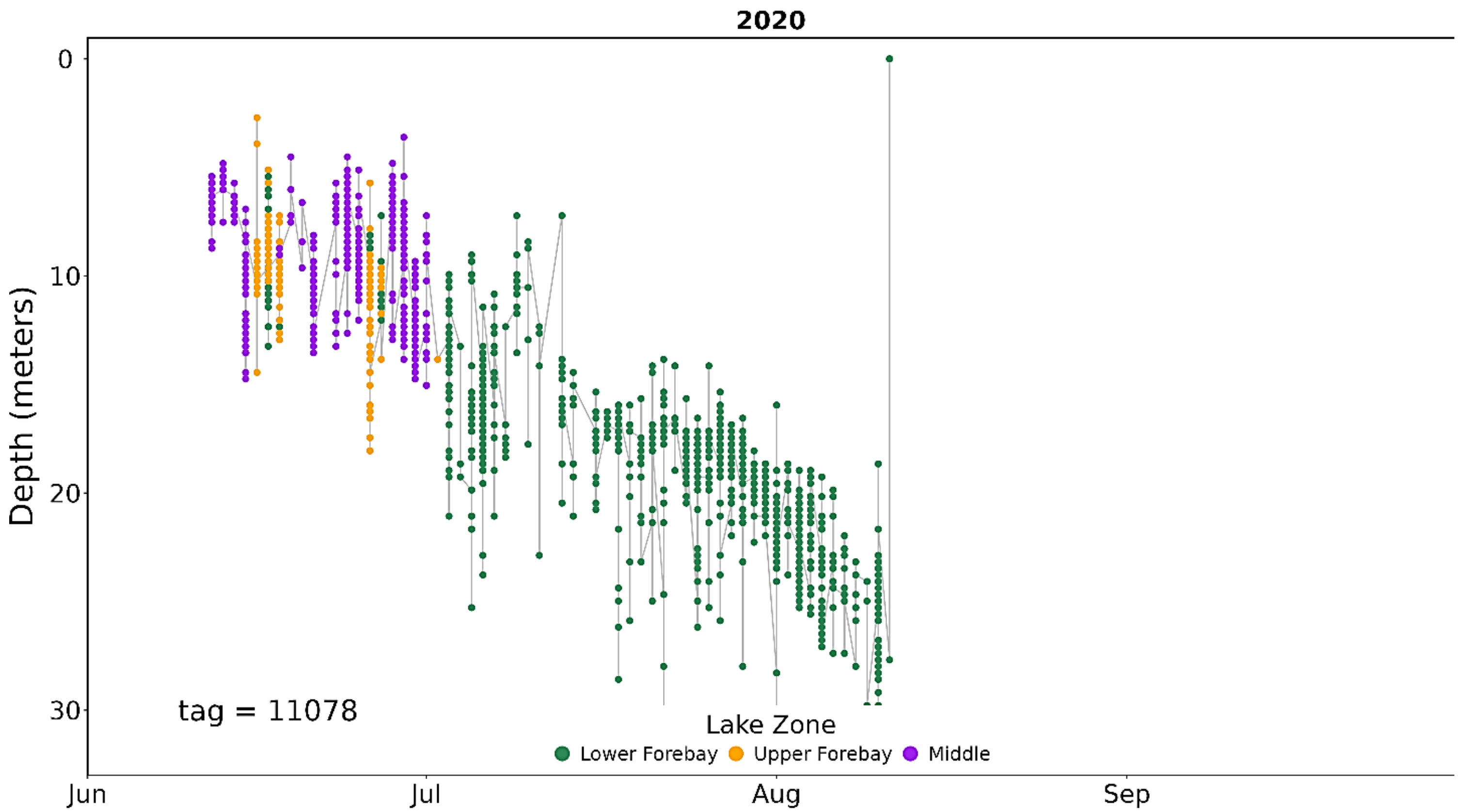


FIGURE E.4. Individual 11078 dives within the hypolimnion and progressively utilizes deeper water until they are caught by an angler where they were detected at the surface and then never detected again.

Appendix F. Monthly Average Temperature (C˚)

Table F.1. Monthly average temperature (C˚) and standard error (SE) of fish detected on receivers in 2020, 2021, 2022, and all years combined (excludes receivers near discharge water).

	2020		2021		2022		All Years	
	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE	Avg.	SE
January			8.9	0.01	10.9	0.01	10.3	0.01
February			7.9	0.01	9.1	0.00	8.7	0.00
March			10.7	0.02	13.0	0.01	12.5	0.01
April			16.6	0.02	16.6	0.01	16.6	0.01
May	20.8	0.04	21.6	0.01	21.7	0.01	21.6	0.01
June	22.4	0.01	22.5	0.01	22.9	0.02	22.5	0.01
July	24.9	0.03	26.4	0.01	26.7	0.02	26.1	0.01
August	27.0	0.02	28.0	0.00	28.3	0.01	27.8	0.01
September	25.9	0.01	26.7	0.01	26.5	0.01	26.4	0.00
October	21.6	0.01	23.3	0.01	20.1	0.01	22.4	0.01
November	17.9	0.01	16.2	0.01	18.0	0.01	16.8	0.01
December	12.2	0.01	13.1	0.00			12.8	0.00