



SILVER SPRINGS STATE FISH & WILDLIFE AREA

BIG LAKE

FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

LOCATION – Silver Springs is located in Kendall County, 5 miles west of Yorkville on Fox Road.

DESCRIPTION – All seven of the gravel pits at this state site contain a variety of warm-water fish species, while the two largest, Beaver Lake (4.5 acres) and Big Lake, also known as Loon Lake (22.0 acres), are actively managed and will provide the most consistent action. Big Lake contains a maximum depth of 20 feet and averages 11.8 feet. A concession stand located at the park provides paddle boat rental, bait, food and drinks. A gravel boat ramp is available at Big Lake, with boats restricted to trolling motors only. A barrier-free fishing pier with access is also available at Big Lake. A one-lane concrete boat ramp on the Fox River is present as well.

HISTORY AND STATUS OF THE FISHERY - To monitor the fish population, Big Lake is surveyed every other year. Aquatic vegetation is monitored annually and treated as required and Fluridone has been utilized in early spring applications to arrest the growth of Eurasian Milfoil and Curleyleaf Pondweed. These applications have generally provided control for multiple seasons. Aquatic habitat projects have included the introduction and establishment of selected emergent aquatic plants as well as man-made structures placed in mid-water locations.

Big Lake receives annual stockings of 8” to 10” Channel Catfish and catchable-size Rainbow Trout both Spring and Fall. *No special mercury advisory or other contaminant-related consumption advisories pertain.*

LARGEMOUTH BASS – The 2020 survey had an overall catch rate of 2.4 fish/min which was the highest seen since 2013. A relatively large collection of young-of-the-year Largemouth Bass contributed to this high rate. This is welcome, as relatively few smaller/younger fish were collected in the 2016 survey. The largest fish captured was just over 19 inches. The length frequency distribution indicates a fair amount of fish “stock piled” just beneath the legal limit. Body condition was adequate for all but the Preferred (≥ 15 inches) size group of fish. **Fishing Regulation:** 15” minimum length limit.

SMALLMOUTH BASS – A total of seven (7) Smallmouth Bass were collected in 2020, ranging from 11 - 15.5 inches. This is the most fish collected in a survey since 2004. Most surveys collect fish ≥ 9 inches, with fish ≥ 15 inches occasionally observed. Smallmouth Bass stocking has long ceased, with the last stocking taking place before 1996. The current population has been able to reproduce and recruit in sufficient numbers to make an appearance in most surveys. Smallmouth Bass often struggle when cohabitating with Largemouth Bass, though this population has managed to survive (likely due to lake morphology). **Fishing Regulation:** 15” minimum length limit.

BLUEGILL – Bluegill dominated the 2020 catch and had a record high catch rate of 6.1 fish/min. Young-of-the-year fish were partially responsible for this high rate, though the number of fish ≥ 3 inches was higher than the previous survey. While the largest fish was 9 inches, the Proportional Size Distribution (PSD) indicated the adult population is mainly comprised of smaller individuals 3 – 6 inches in length. Body condition (plumpness) was poor for all size groups, which may indicate overcrowding.

REDEAR SUNFISH – Forty-two (42) Redear Sunfish were collected in 2020, which is a dramatic improvement over the 2016 survey. The sizes ranged from 1.5 – 8.5 inches, indicating that natural reproduction is taking place. Redear Sunfish in excess of 10 inches have previously been collected in these surveys.

CHANNEL CATFISH – Catchable Channel Catfish are requested from the state hatchery system on an annual basis. Natural reproduction is not expected, and this fishery could be classified as a “put-take” fishery. **Fishing Regulation:** 6 fish daily harvest limit.

CRAPPIE – Seven Crappie were collected in 2020 (4 Black Crappie and 3 White Crappie). Crappie are not commonly collected in these surveys. The largest Black Crappie was 12 inches and the largest White Crappie was 4 inches. Despite their scarcity, but most surveys collect fish at least 10 inches in size.

YELLOW BASS - The likely result of an unauthorized angler release, Yellow Bass have established a reproducing and recruiting population. Yellow Bass are highly undesirable due to their added pressure on the lake’s forage base without adding any benefit to anglers. Their presence in Big Lake is an excellent case study of how unwanted and illegal fish introductions can have unintended consequences.

ADDITIONAL LAKE INFORMATION - A gravel boat ramp is available at Big Lake. Fishing at Big Lake is closed approximately two weeks prior to the opening of the Spring and Fall trout seasons. A concession stand located at the park provides paddle boat rental, bait, food and drinks. A one-lane concrete boat ramp on the Fox River is present at the site as well. **Boaters – Electric trolling motor only.**

Additional Site-Specific Fishing Regulations

All fish species - Two pole and line fishing only.

Large or Smallmouth Bass – 15-inch minimum length limit

Channel Catfish – 6 fish daily harvest limit.

Rainbow Trout – Spring and fall closed season (Big Lake).

CONTACT INFORMATION – Silver Springs State Fish and Wildlife Area: 630/553-6297.
IDNR Fisheries County Fish Biologist: 630/553-6680.