



BRAIDWOOD LAKE

FISHERIES STATUS SUMMARY

LOCATION – Braidwood Lake is located in Will County approximately 1¼ miles south of the Village of Braidwood adjacent to U.S. Route 53.

DESCRIPTION – Braidwood Lake is a 2,640 acre, partially perched cooling lake. When impounded in 1981 several old strip-mine pits were flooded within the lake proper. No horsepower limitations; maximum speed limit is 40 mph except in designated "no wake" and "hazard" areas; working gasoline engine required as main propulsion unit; boats under 14' are not recommended. County Line Road Access (south access) has a four-lane concrete boat ramp with 35 car/trailer parking. An additional 75+ car lot is located adjacent to the ramp area. Cemetery Road Access (north access) has a two-lane concrete boat ramp with parking for 35 car/trailers. A majority of the shoreline is open to bank fishing, and these areas are clearly marked. Access to the interior islands by anglers is prohibited. Steep drop-offs, rock piles, man-made habitat, current and thermal breaks and woody cover are all present. The nature of this lake requires extreme care in boating and a good topographic map is well worth the expense.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES - The fishery is evaluated via biennial major surveys and species-specific ancillary surveys. Fish habitat enhancement has been conducted for several years and most recently involves the installation of commercially made units. Braidwood Lake supports a persistent phytoplankton bloom which suppresses rooted aquatic vegetation.

STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY –Braidwood Lake receives annual stockings of largemouth bass, blue catfish and most recently hybrid striped bass. *No special mercury advisory or other contaminant-related consumption advisories pertain.* Below is a brief description of the major sportfish species in this water body.

LARGEMOUTH BASS – The largemouth bass population continues to improve as fall collection numbers trend upwards. The 2017 collection increased by nearly 10% over the preceding survey and represented the most largemouth bass ever collected in any IDNR survey. Bass which were less than 8" accounted for 44.4% of the total collected, while those 8" and larger reached record-setting numbers and were more than twice the long-term average. The density of smaller bass is largely due to the addition of 48,072 4-inch fish just months prior to the survey as well as the successful survival of the previous year's stocking. The results from 2107 are encouraging as the density of legal size bass showed a favorable increase, accounting for 28% of the adult bass collected. The percentage of 18"- plus bass in recent surveys continues to account for less than 5% of the adult bass collected. Braidwood Lake is also popular with tournament anglers. In 2017 the average size for the biggest bass caught in these tournaments weighed 4lbs. 8 oz.

BLUEGILL – Found throughout the lake, bluegills are more commonly collected in or near rip-rapped shorelines. Larger fish seem to be in decline, as the average size bluegill in the 2017 survey was 5.3". Bluegills larger than 7" are generally uncommon.

CHANNEL CATFISH – A combination of very successful natural reproduction and high survival of young fish leads to a population dominated by smaller fish. Channel catfish collected in the 2017 survey ranged from 3" to 30" and 15 lbs. As it has been for the past several years, the average size is just over 13" and ½ pound.

BLUE CATFISH – Blue catfish stockings were initiated in 2003 and, with few exceptions, have occurred annually to 2016. Fall sampling has generally provided an inadequate sample of the population for the most part and ancillary electrofishing/netting is needed to obtain a more accurate assessment. The 2017 survey provided one of the best collections number-wise with fish ranging from 11.0” to 36.6”. Length frequency distribution, while somewhat spotty, does indicate the presence of multiple year classes. The largest collected in the 2017 survey weighed 26 pounds.

HYBRID STRIPED BASS – This stocking program commenced in 2011 and striped bass hybrid fingerlings have been stocked annually, except in 2013, to 2016. Stocking rates ranged from 6.9 to 17.9 fish per acre with most averaging less than one inch at stocking. The exception was 2015 when larger fingerlings (4.5”) were produced and stocked through Exelon’s Quad Cities fish hatchery. Returns in fall surveys have been somewhat disappointing although site reports indicate good catches had been made by anglers. Due to a decline in shad numbers in the past few surveys, a moratorium has been placed on this stocking program until such time that the forage base has had a chance to recover.

ADDITIONAL FISH SPECIES – Excess production at the IDNR hatchery systems has allowed for the stocking of redear sunfish on a few occasions and while not as prevalent as bluegill, larger specimens are caught. Flathead catfish were also stocked several years ago and a remnant population exists today. Braidwood Lake is maintained by periodically pumping water from the Kankakee River. As a result, the lake supports a variety of fish species which include common carp, quillback, freshwater drum and others. Braidwood Lake is supported by a shad forage base (gizzard and threadfin) as well as various minnow species.

Selected Species Collected in the 2017 Fall Survey by Size Groups (All Gear Types Combined)

Species	Number of Fish Caught in Each Length Group (Inches)								
	0-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-19	20-24	25-29	30+	Total
Largemouth bass	124	258	59	129	104	0	0	0	674
Smallmouth bass	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Black crappie	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Bluegill	421	82	0	0	0	0	0	0	503
Hybrid striped bass	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Blue catfish	0	0	2	16	9	11	15	11	64
Channel catfish	4	1	22	15	8	2	2	0	54
Common carp	0	0	3	19	76	56	69	7	230

FISHING REGULATIONS – Statewide fishing regulations apply at this lake (see current Illinois Fishing Information booklet and IFISHILLINOIS website <http://www.ifishillinois.org/> for specific details).

Additional Site Specific fishing regulations:

Open daily from 6:00 a.m. to sunset from March 1 to ten days prior to the opening of the waterfowl season.

All fish species - Two pole and line fishing only.

Largemouth or Smallmouth Bass – 15” minimum length limit; 3 fish daily creel limit.

Hybrid Striped Bass – 10 fish daily creel/3 fish 17” or longer

CONTACT INFORMATION – Mazonia/Braidwood State Fish and Wildlife Area: 815/263-0063.
IDNR Fisheries County Biologist: 630/553-6680.

Braidwood Lake Map

