



Forbes Lake

Fisheries Fact Sheet

Forbes Lake was constructed in Stephen A. Forbes State Park near Salem in 1963.

Location: Forbes Lake is located in Marion County, approximately 13 miles northeast of Salem Illinois.

Area: Forbes Lake has a surface area of 540 acres, a maximum depth of 31 feet, and a mean depth of 12 feet. The lake has 18 miles of shoreline and a watershed of 13,800 acres.

Status of the Sport Fishery: The sport fish population in Forbes Lake is comprised primarily of largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, white crappie, and channel catfish. The lake is stocked annually with saugeye (walleye/sauger hybrid), channel catfish, and hybrid striped bass. The lake also contains a strong population of yellow bullheads and large common carp (20+ lbs.). The fish population is surveyed annually, and summaries below are based on the results of the most recent population survey and four-year trends in the population indices.

Largemouth Bass - On April 01, 2019 the 14" – 18" protected slot limit was replaced by a 14" minimum length limit. The size structure of the bass population remained fairly stable from 2019 to 2020. All of the largemouth bass size structure indices met, or exceeded, their target ranges. The electrofishing catch rate increased. However, average body condition decreased, but remained above the lake management plan target level. The percentage of bass over the 14" minimum decreased from 30% in 2019, but nearly 25% of the adult bass collected in 2020 were over 14". For 2021, anglers can expect bass over 14" to weigh between 1.3 – 5 pounds, with some fish approaching 7 pounds.

Bluegill – The size structure of the bluegill population remains poor. Overall body condition improved, but body condition was much higher for smaller fish (< 6" Wr = 100) than larger fish (> 6" Wr = 87). The fishery continues to be comprised almost entirely of fish < 7.5" in length. Anglers can expect most fish to be between 5" – 7" and weigh 0.1 – 0.25 pounds.

Crappie - The size structure of the white crappie population remained relatively poor, but crappie are abundant. Average body condition for all sizes of crappie decreased to below the lake management plan target. Average body condition for crappie less than 8" long was especially poor (Wr = 82) and crappie less than 8" comprised more than 47% of the sample in 2020. **Beginning on April 01, 2021, a new crappie regulation will take effect on Forbes Lake. There will be no creel limit on crappie under 8" in length, but only 10 crappie 8" in length and longer may be harvested per day.** Crappie fishing in 2021 should be good and anglers can expect most fish to range from 6" – 9" in length with a few larger fish over 10". **Harvest of crappie less than 8" is strongly encouraged.**

Channel Catfish – Catfish remain abundant in Forbes Lake and should provide good fishing opportunities in the coming year. Body condition (Wr = 93) remained above target and catch rate increased. Most fish will range from 1 – 3 pounds with larger fish exceeding 5 pounds. This lake provides excellent bank fishing opportunities. Drift fishing the main lake is also very productive.

Saugeye – Saugeye are not very common in the annual lake surveys. In 2020, no saugeye were collected. The 2019 survey produced 4 saugeye representing four different year classes. These fish ranged from 9” – 23” in length and up to 5.25 pounds.

Hybrid Striped Bass – The 2019 and 2020 surveys produced zero hybrid striped bass. The 2018 survey produced three year classes of hybrid striped bass. They ranged in size from 12” – 20” in length and up to 4.5 pounds.

Fishing Regulations: Two pole and line fishing only

Species	Daily Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
Largemouth Bass	6	14”
Striped, White, or Hybrid Striped Bass	3	17”
Channel Catfish	6	None
The following crappie regulation takes effect on April 01, 2021:		
Black, White, or Hybrid Crappie	Unlimited harvest under 8”; 10 fish 8” and longer	

Additional Regulations:

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