



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 585 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, and is stocked annually with saugeye (walleye/sauger hybrid), 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 - To improve the growth rates and condition of the smaller stunted bass and increase the numbers of larger bass, a 14" – 18" protected slot limit was placed in effect on April 1, 2015. The new slot limit was designed to improve the size structure of the bass population by allowing harvest of the overcrowded, slow growing small bass in the population while protecting the larger faster growing fish. Data from the 2017 fall population survey indicate the regulation is working as planned. Over the past year the number of bass below the slot has decreased by 28%, and the percentage of the population exceeding 14" increased by 17% (RSD 14 = 35). Condition for fish below the slot was higher than pre-regulation (Wr 90) and condition for bass in and above the slot was excellent (Wr 97). The number of larger bass in the population also improved significantly. The percent of the population exceeding 18" rose more than 100% over the past year to just over 11%. For 2018 anglers can expect the bass under 14" to weigh up to 1.3 lbs. and bass over 18" to range from 3.2 – 6 lbs. with a few larger fish up to 7 lbs.

Bluegill – The size structure of the bluegill population remains poor. Body condition was much higher for smaller fish (< 6" Wr = 93) than larger fish (> 6" Wr = 87). The fishery continues to be comprised almost entirely of fish < 7" in length. Currently less than 7% of the population exceeds 7". As the size structure of the bass population continues to improve, it should have an increasingly positive influence on the size structure of the bluegill population.

Crappie - The size structure of the white crappie population remained stable and relatively poor. The percentage of the population exceeding 10" in length rose 10% in 2017 (RSD10 = 11) but, condition remained well below target (Wr 86). Anglers can expect most fish in the coming year to range from 7" – 10" in length with a few larger fish to 14".

Channel Catfish – Catfish remain abundant in Forbes Lake and should provide good fishing opportunities in the coming year. Body condition remains excellent (Wr 96) and growth rates are above average. Most fish will range from 1 – 4.5 pounds with larger fish exceeding 6 pounds common. This lake provides excellent bank fishing opportunities. Drift fishing the main lake is also very productive.

Saugeye – Four year classes were collected in this year’s survey, and the catch rate of just over 8 per net-night was well above average. The current population ranges from 14” – 25” in length, with many of the larger fish in the 3 – 6 lbs. range.

Hybrid Striped Bass – This year’s survey produced four year classes of hybrids and a record catch rate of just under 8 per net-night. They ranged in size from 8” – 24” in length with most of the larger fish in the 2 - 12 lbs. range. In spite of the promising survey results, the population will decline in coming years as hybrid striped bass production and stocking have been discontinued statewide.

Fishing Regulations:

Species	Daily Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
Largemouth Bass	6	14” – 18” protected slot limit
Striped, White, or Hybrid Striped Bass	3	17”
Channel Catfish	6	None

Additional Regulations: Two pole and line fishing only.

Contacts: Stephen A. Forbes State Park 618/547-3381, DNR Fisheries 618/393-6732.

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