

# **Carlyle Lake Fishing Fact Sheet**

## **Illinois Department of Natural Resources**

Carlyle Lake is the largest manmade lake within Illinois and is home to many species of fish. The lake is located in southwestern Illinois, 50 miles east of St. Louis, principally in Clinton County, with Carlyle being the largest city bordering the lake. It was created in 1967 when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dammed the Kaskaskia River. The primary sport fish include Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, Redear Sunfish, Black and White Crappie, White Bass, Sauger, Channel Catfish, and Flathead Catfish. Carlyle Lake provides good fishing for most of these species. The populations of some of the primary sport fish tend to cycle year to year. Currently the lake supports excellent populations of crappie, catfish, and White Bass. Fish population surveys are conducted annually. Fish that are stocked annually include Sauger, Largemouth Bass, crappie, and Redear Sunfish. Hybrid striped bass and Blue Catfish have been stocked annually since 2021 and will continue to be stocked when available.

### **Fishing Prospects:**

#### **LARGEMOUTH BASS**

We collected 25 Largemouth Bass per hour during the 2023 electrofishing survey, which is very similar to the 27 per hour collected in the 2022 survey. Thirty-five percent of the stock sized (adult) fish collected were longer than the minimum length limit of 14 inches, and 29 percent were over 15 inches. Four percent were over 18 inches. The largest bass collected was 20 inches and weighed 4.6 pounds. Young of the year fish were also collected indicating some spawning occurred in 2023. Fish of all sizes were in excellent body condition indicating an abundant forage base (primarily Gizzard Shad) and good growth. Angling opportunities for Largemouth Bass should be fair to good.

#### **WHITE BASS**

White Bass remain very abundant and exhibit a good population structure. The catch rate during our 2023 survey was 75 White Bass per hour which is up from 59 per hour collected in 2022. Multiple year classes were collected including young of the year fish, indicating a successful spawning effort. The overall size is down a little from previous surveys. Thirty-six percent of the stock sized (adult) fish collected were over 12 inches; 16 percent were over 13 inches; and 7 percent were over 14 inches. Expect White Bass fishing to be very good with high numbers but slightly smaller sizes.

#### **CRAPPIE**

The crappie population in Carlyle Lake remains excellent. The combined catch rate of White and Black Crappie in our 2023 electrofishing survey was 51 fish per hour. The combined catch rate of White and Black Crappie in our 2023 spring trap netting survey was 29 fish per net-night. These numbers are consistent with previous surveys. Sixty-nine percent of the stock sized (adult) White Crappie collected by electrofishing were over the minimum length limit of 10 inches, and 29 percent of the Black Crappie were over 10 inches. Our 2023 spring netting survey

had positive results as well. Sixty-six percent of the stock sized White Crappie and 26 percent of Black Crappie netted were over 10 inches. Nine percent of stock sized White Crappie and 10 percent of Black Crappie netted were over 12 inches. This shows a high percentage of quality sized fish present. A good number of young crappie were also collected in the 2023 surveys which should help ensure the quality of the population in coming years. Crappie fishing should be excellent for numbers of fish and size quality.

**CHANNEL CATFISH**

The Channel Catfish population is very consistent in Carlyle Lake. We collected 10 Channel Catfish per hour which is very similar to the numbers collected in the past 10 years of surveys. Lengths ranged from 12–27 inches and weights ranged from 1–7 pounds. Channel Catfish are abundant in the lake and should provide good angling opportunities for quality sized fish.

**FLATHEAD CATFISH**

The Flathead Catfish population is very consistent in Carlyle Lake. We collected 5 Flathead Catfish per hour which is very similar to the numbers collected in the past 10 years of surveys. Lengths ranged from 8–36 inches and weights ranged from less than a pound to 35 pounds. There is an abundance of large fish in the population that should provide good angling opportunities for quality sized fish. Flathead Catfish fishing should be very good in Carlyle Lake.

**BLUEGILL**

The Bluegill population in Carlyle Lake remains fair. Catch rates during the 2023 survey were up with 111 fish collected per hour of electrofishing compared to 97 fish per hour in 2022. Twenty-one percent of the stock sized (adult) Bluegill collected were over 6 inches but very few were over 7 inches. Bluegill fishing should be fair for medium-sized fish in Carlyle Lake.

**SAUGER**

The Sauger catch rate during the 2023 survey was one fish per hour, which is consistent with the numbers collected in the past 10 years of surveys. Lengths ranged from 7–21.5 inches. Although Sauger do not occur in high numbers in our surveys, they are an established species in Carlyle Lake and should provide good fishing opportunities for anglers that know how to target them.

<b>Carlyle Lake Stocking 2023</b>			
<b><u>Species</u></b>	<b><u>Size (inches)</u></b>	<b><u>Count</u></b>	<b><u>Stocking Date</u></b>
Sauger	1.3	149,410	5/21/2023
Sauger	1.5	53,743	5/25/2023
Largemouth Bass	1.5	12,765	6/27/2023
Largemouth Bass	1.1	18,818	6/29/2023
Blue Catfish	2.0	9,820	7/04/2023
Striped Bass x White Bass (Wiper)	2.3	13,359	7/25/2023
Striped Bass x White Bass (Wiper)	3.0	15,226	7/26/2023
Largemouth Bass	2.8	63,236	8/02/2023
Largemouth Bass	4.1	38,643	9/04/2023

Redear Sunfish	1.3	59,960	9/20/2023
Redear Sunfish	1.3	33,219	9/26/2023
Blue Catfish	6.6	6,988	9/28/2023
Redear Sunfish	1.2	30,843	10/03/2023
Redear Sunfish	1.4	18,124	10/11/2023
Largemouth Bass (from Hazlet Rearing Ponds)	6.8	3,406	10/18/2023
Redear Sunfish (from Hazlet Rearing Ponds)	2.6	34,801	10/18/2023
Bluegill (from Hazlet Rearing Ponds)	2.5	158,537	10/18/2023
Redear Sunfish	1.4	55,071	10/22/2023
White Crappie (from USACOE Rearing Ponds)	3-4	50,000	10/27/2023

## **Additional Site Information:**

**LAKE STATISTICS:** 24,580 acres; maximum depth 35 feet; average depth 11 feet.

**WATERCRAFT:** No outboard motor size limit. Eleven boat ramps are located at various recreational areas around the lake. In addition, there are three boat ramps on the Kaskaskia River, one just above and two below the reservoir.

**FISHING REGULATIONS:** Largemouth or Smallmouth Bass, 14” minimum length limit, 6 fish per day. White, Black, or hybrid Crappie, 10” minimum length limit, 15 fish per day. Sauger, Walleye, or their hybrids, 14” minimum length limit, 6 fish/day. White Bass, no creel limit if under 17 inches; 3 fish per day combined creel limit of White Bass, Striped Bass, Yellow Bass, and their hybrids if 17 inches or longer. Visit the [www.ifishillinois.org](http://www.ifishillinois.org) website for more information.

**AMENITIES:** Campgrounds, cottages, and three full-service marinas are located around the lake. Bait is available in the town of Carlyle and seasonally at the Eldon Hazlet State Recreation Area Camp Store.