

Rend Lake

2024 Fisheries Fact Sheet

Location – Rend Lake is located in Franklin and Jefferson counties along IL Interstate 57 approximately 15 miles south of Mt. Vernon just northwest of Benton.

Area – At normal pool (405.0 feet), Rend Lake has a surface area of 20,633 acres, a maximum depth of 35 feet, and a mean depth of 10 feet. The lake is thirteen miles long and three miles wide, and has 162 miles of shoreline. It is the second largest impoundment in Illinois.

Status of the Sport Fishery – The fish population is surveyed annually, and summaries of some of the more popular sport fisheries below are based on the results of the most recent fall population surveys.

Largemouth Bass – Bass fishing at Rend Lake should be good in 2024. During the 2023 survey, bass were collected at a rate of 87 fish/hr. The average catch rate during the last 10 surveys is 77 fish/hr. Of the 417 bass collected during the 2023 fall survey, 34% exceeded the 14-inch minimum length limit, 29% were greater than 15 inches, and 6% are over 18 inches. The largest bass collected in the 2023 survey was 5.9 pounds. No spotted bass were collected in the 2023 survey.

The main problem with largemouth bass in Rend Lake is reproduction. Reproduction is dependent on spring water levels which can vary dramatically at Rend Lake. This results in the need for an annual supplemental LMB stocking to offset poor reproduction years. Just over 684,720 bass fingerlings have been stocked in Rend Lake in the last ten years including 274,044 bass (1-2 inches) and 12,536 bass (4 inches) in 2023.

Crappie – The fishing prospects for crappie remain excellent for 2024. The 2023 catch rate for crappie (33 fish/net) was below the five-year average catch rate of 54 fish/net. Warmer water temperatures may have reduced the trap net catch rate as the crappie electrofishing catch rate of 103 fish/hr was well above the 5-year average of 79 fish/hr.

Fifteen percent of the crappie collected during the netting survey were over 10 inches and another 21% were between 9-10 inches. Only 3% of the crappie collected during the netting survey were over 12 inches and no crappie over 15 inches were collected in the electrofishing or netting surveys. The small percentage of crappie over 12 inches and lack of crappie over 15 inches suggests that crappie harvest is high. Seventy-eight percent of the crappie collected during the netting survey were white crappie.

Bluegill - Bluegill will be abundant in the coming year with most keepers measuring 7-8" in length and averaging 1/3 lb or less. A few bluegill over 8 inches were collected during the survey.

Catfish - The 2023 catch rate for channel catfish was 5 fish/hr which was below the five-year average catch rate of 13 fish/hr. In the coming year channel catfish from 1–3 lbs should be abundant with larger fish up to 5 lbs common. Nineteen flathead catfish were collected during the survey and ranged from 11-25 inches in length with the largest weighing 8.5 lbs. Rend Lake has an excellent catfish population.

Striped Bass Hybrids - Four striped bass hybrids (16-18 inches) were collected in the 2023 survey. The number of hybrid striped bass remains low. Since the stocking program was revived in 2008 a total of 290,356 hybrid stripers have been stocked into Rend Lake. A total of 21,951 striped bass hybrids (2.95 inches) were stocked in 2023. Many anglers target the striped bass hybrids in the tailwater below the dam in the spring (April/May).

White Bass – The 2023 catch rate for white bass was 12 fish/hr which was equal to the ten-year average catch rate of 12 fish/hr. Anglers can expect the catchable population in the coming year to be largely comprised of fish 12-15 inches and weighing 0.5-1.5 lbs.

Fishing Regulations: *Consult the current Illinois Fishing Regulations Booklet for more detailed information.

Species	Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
Largemouth, Smallmouth, or Spotted Bass	6	14"
White, Black, or Hybrid Crappie	25 daily, not more than 10 exceeding 10"	
White, Yellow, or Hybrid Striped Bass	20 daily, not more than 3 exceeding 17"	
Channel Catfish	None	None

Additional Contacts:

Rend Lake U.S Army Corps of Engineers 618/724-2493

Rend Lake Marina 618-724-7651

IDNR Fisheries – Shawn Hirst 618-559-5009

Wayne Fitzgerald State Park – 618-629-2320

Fish Attractors – for a map showing types and locations of fish habitat added to Rend Lake please visit the following website: visitrendlake.com