



Forbes Lake

Fisheries Fact Sheet

Forbes Lake was constructed in Stephen A. Forbes State Park near Kinmundy, Illinois in 1963.

Location: Forbes Lake is located in Marion County, approximately 13 miles northeast of Salem, Illinois and 5 miles southeast of Kinmundy, 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, white crappie, and channel catfish. The lake is stocked annually with saugeye (walleye/sauger hybrid), channel catfish, and hybrid striped bass (wiper). The lake also contains a strong population of yellow bullhead 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. Following the removal of the slot limit, the bass population size structure has declined. In the 2023 survey, approximately 58% of the adult bass in the sample were longer than 12" in length. Approximately 34% of the adult bass collected were 14" or longer and only 5% exceeded 18" in length (42% of the 2018 value when the slot limit was still in place). The electrofishing catch rate increased slightly from 2022 to 2023 and exceeded the lake management plan target. Average body condition remained stable and above lake management goals. For 2024, anglers can expect most bass over 14" to weigh between 1.4 – 5 pounds and bass in the 8" – 13" range should also be abundant.

Bluegill: The size structure of the bluegill population remained poor. Overall body condition improved slightly, but body condition continued to remain much higher for smaller fish (< 6" Wr = 100) than larger fish (> 6" Wr = 90). The fishery continued to be comprised almost entirely of fish < 7.5" in length. The bluegill population in this lake will likely always be hindered by gizzard shad. 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 continued to be very abundant. Average body condition for all sizes of crappie remained below the lake management plan target. In 2023, 60% of the crappie collected were less than 8" long and 40% exceeded 8". Approximately 54% of the total crappie collected were between 6" – 8", while 28% were between 8" – 9" (82% between 6" – 9"). Approximately 13% of the adult crappie collected exceeded 9" long and 9% exceeded 10" long. **On April 01, 2021, a new crappie regulation took effect on Forbes Lake. There is 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 2024 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 ($Wr = 91$) improved to over the lake management plan target and electrofishing catch rates remained high. Approximately 99% of the adult channel catfish collected were 14” or longer and 55% exceeded 18”. Most fish in 2024 will range from 1 – 4 pounds with larger fish exceeding 6 pounds. This lake provides many bank fishing opportunities. Drift fishing the main lake is also very productive.

Saugeye: Saugeye are not very common in the annual Forbes Lake surveys. Approximately 75% of the saugeye surveyed in 2023 were over the 14” minimum, but catch rates were very low. Saugeye surveyed in the spring had very good average body condition and those surveyed in the fall had poor body condition. Most saugeye over the 14” minimum should weigh 1 – 3 pounds and a few larger fish may be caught. Saugeye fishing in 2024 will likely be poor to fair.

Hybrid Striped Bass: Hybrid striped bass are also uncommon in the annual Forbes Lake surveys, but spring gillnetting catch rates in 2023 were above average. Approximately 38% of the adult hybrid striped bass collected exceeded the 17” minimum length limit. Most hybrid striped bass caught in 2024 are expected to be more than 14” long and fish over the 17” minimum length should exceed 3 pounds. Hybrid striped bass fishing in 2024 will likely be poor to fair.

Fishing Regulations: Pole and line fishing only; no more than two poles with two or less hooks or lures per pole. Bowfishing is also allowed.

Species	Daily Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
Largemouth Bass	6	14”
Striped, White, or Hybrid Striped Bass	3	17”
Saugeye	6	14”
Channel Catfish	6	None
Black, White, or Hybrid Crappie	Unlimited harvest under 8”; 10 fish 8” and longer	

Additional Regulations: IDNR tournament permits are required and must be submitted on ifishillinois.org.

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