



Newton Lake

Fisheries Fact Sheet

Newton Lake is a cooling reservoir currently owned by Vistra. It was constructed by Central Illinois Power Company in 1975 and was leased by the IDNR and opened for fishing in 1980.

Location: Newton Lake is located in Jasper County, approximately 6 miles southwest of Newton, Illinois and 18 miles southeast of Effingham, Illinois.

Area: Newton Lake has a surface area of 1,750 acres, an average depth of 16 feet, and a maximum depth of 40 feet. The lake has 52 miles of shoreline and a watershed of 30,720 acres.

Status of the Sport Fishery: The sport fishery in Newton Lake is best known for the largemouth bass fishery. Other conventional sport fish include white bass, channel catfish, crappie, and bluegill. The lake also contains large numbers of common carp, threadfin shad, and gizzard shad. Newton Lake is open year-round* with the best fishing opportunities from fall through spring. 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: The overall size structure of the bass population collected in Newton Lake declined from 2023 to 2024. The percentage of adult bass in the 12" – 15" range increased from 32% in 2023 to 48% in 2024, while the percentage in the 15" – 20" size class remained stable at 38%. The percentage of adult bass greater than the 18" minimum length limit decreased by 40% from 10% of the sample in 2023 to 6% of the sampled fish in 2024. The electrofishing catch rate decreased to 243 bass per hour, but all size structure indices met, or exceeded, their target goals. This lake continues to support a good bass population, however, the fishery is showing signs of change. Changes to the operation of the coal fired power plant have significantly reduced the amount of hot water discharged into the lake. This has resulted in a reduced growing season, and a shorter spawning season for prey species, especially gizzard shad. In short, it is transitioning from a cooling lake to an ambient lake. However, bass recruitment continues to be high and average body condition is above target ($W_r=92$). For 2025, Newton Lake will still provide good angling opportunities and anglers can expect to catch many fish from 14" – 20" in length ranging from 1.3 – 4.75 pounds. The majority of bass exceeding the 18" minimum should weigh 3.2 pounds or greater.

Channel Catfish: The size structure of the channel catfish population has improved in recent years. Although still dominated by smaller fish, the population contains an adequate number of large fish to provide a good quality fishery. Approximately 77% of the adult channel catfish in the survey were at least 14" long and 32% exceeded 18" in length. High natural reproduction and recruitment in Newton Lake have historically produced large numbers of channel catfish annually and sampling catch rates in 2024 remained high. Gillnetting catch rate remained stable at 28 fish per net-night, but electrofishing catch rates declined from 16 per hour in 2023 to 9 per hour in 2024. Average body condition remained above target at $W_r=90$. For 2025, catfishing should be good, and the majority of the catfish caught will be 1 – 2 pounds with some larger fish over 5 pounds.

White Bass: The white bass population has successfully recruited each year since they were first discovered in 1994 and their numbers have remained relatively constant. However, sampling catch rates increased in 2021 and they increased again in 2022. The catch rates in 2023 decreased to rates more consistent with long term trends. The 2024 survey collected white bass at similar rates to the 2023 survey and was consistent with long term trends. The population continues to exhibit good growth rates and body condition ($W_r=99$), likely due to the abundant threadfin shad forage base. One large size class of fish in the 13” – 16” range will continue to comprise most of the fishery in 2025 and most fish in that size group should weigh 1.12 – 2.12 pounds.

Crappie: Black crappie population numbers have improved in recent years, but the population is primarily sustained by annual stocking efforts and exists at a low density. Spring gillnetting and electrofishing catch rates were lower than average. However, fall trapnetting catch rates were consistent with four-year trends at 3.15 crappie per net-night. Growth rates were good and body condition remained above target. Despite the relatively low numbers, some anglers successfully target crappie each year and consistently catch limits. Blacknose crappie are also present in the lake as a result of 2019, 2021, and 2023 stockings. A small remnant population of white crappie still exists in the lake, but none were collected in the 2024 sample.

Bluegill: The bluegill population is in extremely poor condition. High summer temperatures and a dense population of shad contribute to poor reproduction and slow growth. The majority of the bluegill collected were less than 6” in length and very few bluegill over 7.5” were collected. Only 2% of the adult bluegill sampled were over 7” long. This lake is not recommended for bluegill fishing.

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

Species	Daily Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
Largemouth, Smallmouth, or Spotted Bass	3	18”
White, Black, or Hybrid Crappie	10	10”
White Bass	Unlimited; except no more than 3 over 17”	None
Channel Catfish	None	None

Additional Regulations: IDNR tournament permits are required, and applications must be submitted on ifishillinois.gov.

Newton Lake has a 25hp maximum outboard motor restriction. Larger motors may be used within 150 feet of the two boat ramps for loading and unloading only. Larger motors may not be operated on the lake for any purpose other than loading or unloading.

*Newton Lake is closed to fishing during the 7 days of the regular firearm deer season (the lake is open to fishing during muzzleloader deer season). The East (cold) arm of the lake is closed daily to fishing during the regular duck and Canada goose seasons from one-half hour before sunrise until 1:00 pm. Tournaments are prohibited in June, July, and August. Please consult the current Illinois Fishing Regulations Booklet for more detailed information.

Contacts: Newton Lake State Fish and Wildlife Area 618/783-3478; IDNR Fisheries 618/393-6732.

Updated: 12/23/2024