



East Fork Lake

Fisheries Fact Sheet

East Fork Lake was constructed by the City of Olney in 1971 to serve as a water supply reservoir. Annual boat stickers and City of Olney/IDNR tournament permits are required.

Location: East Fork Lake is located in Richland County, approximately 1 mile north of Olney Illinois.

Area: East Fork Lake has a surface area of 935 acres, a maximum depth of 40 feet, and a mean depth of 15 feet. The lake has 25 miles of shoreline and a watershed of 9,982 acres.

Status of the Sport Fishery: The sport fish population in East Fork Lake is comprised primarily of largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, white and black crappies, channel catfish, and is stocked annually with walleye. The lake also contains common carp, bowfin, and large yellow bullhead. 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: In 2023, the electrofishing catch rate increased and the size structure of the population remained consistent with four-year trends. The 2023 sample showed an increase in the percentage of bass below 12" and a decrease in the percentage of bass in the 12" – 15" size range. The percentage of adult bass exceeding the 15" minimum length limit remained stable at 31%. Average body condition decreased, but it exceeded the lake management plan target. Gizzard shad are the primary forage for largemouth bass in East Fork Lake and most gizzard shad collected were between 2.8" – 4.3". Fishing prospects for the coming year should be good and similar to last year with most keeper bass ranging from 15" – 20" in length and weighing between 1.5 – 4 pounds.

Bluegill: The bluegill population structure remained fair and consistent with recent trends. Electrofishing catch rates increased and remained high at 249 per hour. Average bluegill body condition fell below the lake management target. There was another slight decrease in the number of bluegill greater than 7" (RSD-7=11) and the number of bluegill exceeding 8" remained low at just under 1% of adult bluegill sampled. Angling for bluegill in the coming year should be good with most keepers 5" – 7" in length and 0.10 – 0.25 pounds.

Crappie: The white crappie population structure remained good. The average body condition for all sizes of white crappie remained above target. The percentage of white crappie over 10" in length improved to 43%, while approximately 71% of white crappie exceeded 9" in length. Black crappie are the more dominant species in East Fork Lake and their population also appeared to be doing well. Average black crappie body condition declined, but it remained above the management target. Black crappie electrofishing catch rates remained high and the majority of the fish were between 8" – 10". Approximately 37% of the adult black crappie collected in 2023 exceeded 9" long and only 5% exceeded 10" long. If growth rates remain good, the size structure of the populations should improve further in the coming years. Most angler catches in 2024 are likely to be white and black crappie in the 8" – 9.5" range weighing 0.2 – 0.4 pounds, with some larger white crappie exceeding 10" and 0.5 pounds.

Channel Catfish: Catfish numbers have improved in recent years due to stocking efforts, but overall numbers have remained low in East Fork Lake. Average body condition remained good and above target. Most fish in 2024 will range from 18” – 24” and 2 – 4 pounds, with larger fish approaching 10 pounds. This lake provides good bank fishing opportunities and drift fishing the main lake is also very productive.

Walleye: The size structure of the walleye population remained good this year, but fewer fish were collected than in last year’s surveys. The catch rate was 10 per hour during the electrofishing survey, 3 fish per net-night in the fall net survey, and 11 fish per net-night in the spring netting survey. Approximately 96% of the adult fish collected exceeded the 14” minimum length limit. With many fish in the 1.5 – 4 pound range, this lake should provide good fishing opportunities for walleye in the coming year.

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

Species	Daily Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
Largemouth Bass	6	15”
Walleye	6	14”
White, Black, or Hybrid Crappie	25 collectively	None
Bluegill or Redear Sunfish	25 collectively	None
Channel Catfish	6	None

Additional Regulations: City boat stickers and tournament permits are required. Boat stickers are available at Olney City Hall and local bait shops. City tournament permits are available at Olney City Hall. IDNR tournament applications can be submitted at ifishillinois.org.

Contacts: Olney City Hall 618/393-2130; IDNR Fisheries 618/393-6732.

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