



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, channel catfish, and hybrid striped bass. The lake also contains strong populations 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 2024 survey, approximately 47% of the adult bass in the sample were longer than 12" in length, 31% 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 remained stable at 100 per hour and exceeded the lake management plan target of 60 per hour. Average body condition remained above lake management plan target and bass longer than 14" had much higher average body condition than bass less than 14" long. For 2025, anglers can expect most bass over 14" to weigh between 1.4 – 5 pounds and bass in the 9" – 12" range should also be abundant.

Bluegill: The size structure of the bluegill population remained poor and continued to be comprised almost entirely of fish less than 7.5" in length. Overall body condition decreased slightly, but body condition continued to remain much higher for smaller fish (< 6" $W_r=96$) than larger fish ($\geq 6"$ $W_r = 87$). The bluegill population in this lake will likely always be hindered by gizzard shad. Anglers can expect most fish to be between 5" – 7" long 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 increased to the lake management plan target. In 2024, 54% of the crappie collected were less than 8" long and 46% exceeded 8". Approximately 51.3% of the total crappie collected were between 6" – 8", while 30.3% were between 8" – 9" (81.6% between 6" – 9"). Crappie exceeding 9" long comprised 16% of the adult fish collected in 2024 and 10% exceeded 10" long. Crappie fishing in 2025 should be good for catching abundant numbers and anglers can expect most fish to range from 6" – 9" in length with a few larger fish over 10". **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. 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 ($W_r=90$) declined to the lake management plan minimum target and electrofishing catch rates increased to 28 per hour. Approximately 97% of the adult channel catfish collected were 14” or longer and 34% exceeded 18”. Most fish in 2025 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 89% of the adult saugeye surveyed in 2024 were over the 14” minimum. Gillnetting catch rates improved to 7.3 fish per net-night and electrofishing catch rates doubled to 1.5 hour. Saugeye surveyed in the spring had very good average body condition ($W_r=99$) and those surveyed in the fall had lower body condition ($W_r=91$). Most saugeye over the 14” minimum should weigh 1 – 3 pounds and a few larger fish may be caught. Saugeye fishing in 2025 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 and 2024 were above average. Approximately 62% of the adult hybrid striped bass collected exceeded the 17” minimum length limit. Most hybrid striped bass caught in 2025 are expected to be more than 14” long and fish over the 17” minimum length should exceed 2.6 pounds. Hybrid striped bass fishing in 2025 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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Updated 12/20/2024