



Forbes Lake

Fisheries Fact Sheet

Forbes Lake was constructed in Stephen A. Forbes State Park near Salem in 1963.

Location: Forbes Lake is located in Marion County, approximately 13 miles northeast of Salem 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 bullheads 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 2021 survey, approximately 35% of the adult bass in the sample were longer than 12" in length. Approximately 18% of the adult bass collected were 14" or longer and only 4% exceeded 18" in length. Electrofishing catch rate decreased from 2020 to 2021, but still exceeded the lake management plan target. Average body condition remained stable and above lake management goals. For 2022, anglers can expect bass over 14" to weigh between 1.4 – 4.5 pounds and bass in the 8" – 12" range should also be abundant.

Bluegill – The size structure of the bluegill population remained poor. Overall body condition improved, but body condition was much higher for smaller fish (< 6" Wr = 100) than larger fish (> 6" Wr = 89). The fishery continues 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 were very abundant. Average body condition for all sizes of crappie improved but remained below the lake management plan target. In 2021, 65% of the crappie collected were less than 7" long and 35% exceeded 8". Approximately 61% of the total crappie collected were between 6" – 8", while 25% were between 8" – 9" (86% between 6" – 9"). **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 2022 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 = 94) remained above target and catch rate remained high. Most fish will range from 1 – 3 pounds with larger fish exceeding 5 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. All 19 saugeye sampled in 2021 exceeded 15.5” inches in length and the largest saugeye was 21.5” long. Most saugeye collected in the survey were between 1 - 2.5 pounds, but a few larger fish were collected. Saugeye fishing in 2022 will likely be poor to fair.

Hybrid Striped Bass – Hybrid striped bass are also uncommon in the annual Forbes Lake surveys. Approximately 30% of the adult hybrid striped bass collected were longer than the 17” minimum length limit. The largest hybrid striped bass collected was 23.7” long and weighed just over 8 pounds. Most hybrid striped bass in 2022 are expected to be less than 14” long, but fish over the 17” minimum length should exceed 5 pounds. Hybrid striped bass fishing in 2022 will likely be poor to fair.

Fishing Regulations: Two pole and line fishing only

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

Additional Regulations:

Contacts: Stephen A. Forbes State Park 618/547-3381; IDNR Fisheries 618/393-6732.

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