



Borah Lake

Fisheries Fact Sheet

Borah Lake was constructed by the City of Olney in 1954 to serve as a water supply reservoir. Annual boat stickers and City of Olney/IDNR tournament permits are required.

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

Area: Borah Lake has a surface area of 137 acres, a maximum depth of 26 feet, and a mean depth of 11 feet. The lake has 15 miles of shoreline and a watershed of 2,155 acres.

Status of the Sport Fishery: The sport fish population in Borah Lake is comprised primarily of largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, crappie, and channel catfish. The lake is stocked annually with channel catfish. The lake also contains flathead catfish and 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.

Bass: The size structure of the largemouth bass population was fair. Average body condition declined slightly to just below the lake management plan target. Electrofishing catch rates increased and remained high at 166 per hour. The percentage of larger fish in the sample remained consistent with the 2022 sample. Approximately 10% of the adult fish in the sample exceeded the 14" minimum length limit and 4% were 18" or longer. A large group of 7" – 12" bass were again sampled this year and they should contribute to angler catches in the coming years. Average body condition remained much higher for fish greater than 15" than for smaller fish and is likely due to the gizzard shad forage base in this lake. Gizzard shad collected in the 2023 sampled ranged from 4" to 15" and approximately 75% of those shad were in the 8" – 10" size range. These larger shad are too long for most of the bass in the lake to eat. Bass fishing should be fair to good in 2024 with most bass over the minimum length limit ranging from 14" – 18" in length and weighing 1 – 3 pounds.

Bluegill: Bluegill body condition remained stable in 2023 while electrofishing catch rates increased and remained high at 208 per hour. Approximately half of the adult bluegill in the sample were between 6" – 8" long and only two bluegill over 8" were collected. The percentage of adult bluegill over 7" in length declined from 21% in 2022 to 14% in 2023. Unfortunately, the bluegill population size structure in this lake will likely always be hindered by the presence of gizzard shad. Bluegill fishing in the coming year should be fair to good with the biggest fish near 0.33 pounds.

Redear: The redear sunfish population in Borah Lake is doing very well. Average body condition was really good and catch rates increased. Approximately 37% of the adult redear collected were over 9" long and 19% exceeded 10" in length. The redear sunfish population should provide quality opportunities for fishing in the coming year with some larger fish near 1 pound.

Crappie: Both black and white crappie are abundant in the lake and the size structures for both of these populations are poor. Approximately, 43% of the adult white crappie in this year’s sample exceeded 10” in length and no fish in the 9”-10” size range were collected. However, only 7 white crappie were collected in the electrofishing sample, likely due to the abnormally warm water temperatures during the survey. No black crappie over 9” were collected for the second year in a row and none over 10” have been collected in four years. Average body condition for both species of crappie was just over the lake the management plan minimum target. Crappie fishing should be good in the coming year for catching abundant fish, but the size structure of fish caught will likely be poor. Most crappie in 2024 are expected to be between 6” – 9”, with a few fish possibly exceeding 10” and weighing more than 0.5 pounds. **Harvest of smaller crappie is encouraged.**

Catfish: The channel catfish population is in good shape and their body condition is good (Wr = 98). Approximately 80% of the adult channel catfish collected were 16” or longer and 70% exceeded 18” in length. Channel catfish should provide good fishing opportunities in the coming year. Channel catfish in the 1 – 4 pound range should be common, with some fish nearing 8 – 10 pounds. A small population of flathead catfish also exists in Borah Lake and one was collected in 2023. This flathead catfish was 12.7 pounds and just over 30” long.

Fishing Regulations: Two pole and line fishing only.

Species	Daily Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
Largemouth Bass	6	14”
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 and IDNR tournament applications are available on ifishillinois.org.

Contacts: Olney City Hall 618/395-7302; IDNR Fisheries 618/393-6732.

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