



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 2024, the electrofishing catch rate decreased to 134 per hour and the size structure of the population remained consistent with four-year trends. The 2024 sample showed a 30% increase in the percentage of adult bass in the 12" – 15" size class from 2023. However, there was a 17% decrease in the percentage of fish in 15" – 20" size class. Despite this decrease, 26% of the adult bass collected were over the 15" minimum length limit and 8% exceeded 18" long. Average body condition remained stable and above the lake management plan target at $W_r=93$. Gizzard shad are the primary forage for largemouth bass in East Fork Lake and they ranged from 3.1" – 11.8" long. Fishing prospects for 2025 should be good and similar to 2024, with most keeper bass ranging from 15" – 20" in length and weighing between 1.8 – 4.5 pounds.

Bluegill: The bluegill population structure remained fair and consistent with recent trends. Electrofishing catch rates increased to 303 per hour. Average bluegill body condition increased to the lake management target. There was another slight decrease in the number of bluegill greater than 7" (RSD-7=10) and the number of bluegill exceeding 8" remained low at under 1% of adult bluegill sampled. Angling for bluegill in 2025 should be good with most fish 5" – 7" in length and weighing 0.10 – 0.25 pounds.

Crappie: The white crappie population structure remained good, but the average body condition for all sizes of white crappie was below target. The percentage of white crappie over 10" in length improved to 46%, while approximately 72% of the white crappie exceeded 9" in length. Black crappie are the more numerous species in East Fork Lake and their population also appeared to be doing well, but it was dominated by shorter fish than the white crappie population. Average black crappie body condition remained above the management target. Black crappie electrofishing catch rates remained high and the majority of the fish were between 8" – 10". Approximately 28% of the adult black crappie collected in 2024 exceeded 9" long and 5% exceeded 10" long. Most angler catches in 2025 are likely to be white and black crappie in the 8" – 9.5" range weighing 0.25 – 0.45 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 above target at $Wr=92$. Most fish in 2025 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 in 2024. The catch rate increased to 16 per hour during the electrofishing survey, remained stable at 3 fish per net-night in the fall netting survey, and decreased to 9 fish per net-night in the spring netting survey. Average body condition was much higher for walleye sampled in the spring ($Wr=95$), than it was for fish collected in the fall ($Wr=84$). Approximately 99% 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 2025.

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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