



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, hybrid striped bass, and saugeye. 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 improved slightly and remained above the lake management plan target ($Wr=91$). Electrofishing catch rates remained high at 157 per hour. The percentage of larger fish in the sample remained consistent with the 2022 and 2023 samples. 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. Gizzard shad collected in the 2024 sample ranged from 4" to 13" and approximately 48% of those shad were in the 7" – 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 1.25 – 3.5 pounds.

Bluegill: Bluegill body condition remained stable at the lake management plan target, while electrofishing catch rates decreased, but remained high at 176 per hour. Just over half (55%) of the adult bluegill in the sample were between 6" – 8" long, but only 15% of those fish were over 7" long and no 8" bluegill were collected. Unfortunately, the bluegill population size structure in this lake will likely always be hindered by the presence of gizzard shad and an abundance of small crappie. Bluegill fishing in 2025 should be good for catching abundant numbers of smaller fish, but larger bluegill will be rare. Bluegill in the 5" – 6" size group should weigh 0.08 – 0.16 pounds, with fish over 7" weighing approximately 0.25 pounds.

Redear: The redear sunfish population in Borah Lake is doing very well. Average body condition was very good at $Wr=98$. Catch rates increased from 63 per hour in 2023 to 116 per hour in 2024. Approximately 87% of the adult redear were longer than 7", 38% were over 9" long, and nearly 24% 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 their populations are poor. Approximately 90% of the adult white crappie collected were longer than 8", but only 30% exceeded 9", and 10% were over 10" long. Average body condition for the white crappie collected in the survey was below the lake management plan target at $Wr=85$. Black crappie were more numerous in the 2024 sample, but their population size structure also remained poor. No black crappie longer than 10" were collected for the fifth survey in a row. Approximately 83% of the adult black crappie collected were between 8" – 9", while 9% exceeded 9" long. Average body condition for the black crappie population remained over the lake management target ($Wr=92$). Fishing should be good in the coming year for catching abundant numbers of fish, but the size structure of fish caught will likely be poor. Most crappie in 2025 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 average body condition is high ($Wr = 97$). Approximately 90% of the adult channel catfish collected were 16" or longer and 61% 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 two were collected in 2024. The larger flathead catfish was 40.2 pounds and just over 42" long, while the smaller flathead weighed 11.2 pounds and was 29" long.

Saugeye: Saugeye fingerlings were first stocked in Borah Lake in 2024. Approximately 8,000 fish were stocked at 1.6" long in May. No saugeye were collected in the annual fall survey, but anglers reported catching a few saugeye over 10" long by November. Saugeye are being stocked in Borah Lake to provide an additional predatory fish to prey on the overabundant shad and crappie populations. **Catch and release is encouraged**, but saugeye are subject to the statewide 14" minimum length limit and a 6 fish daily harvest limit.

Hybrid Striped Bass: Hybrid striped bass fingerlings were first stocked in Borah Lake in 2024. Approximately 700 fingerlings were stocked at 1.5" long in July. A single 5" long hybrid striped bass was collected in the September 2024 survey. Hybrid striped bass are being stocked in Borah Lake to prey on the overabundant shad population. **Catch and release is encouraged**, but hybrid striped bass are regulated by the statewide limits. There is no daily limit on hybrid striped bass less than 17", but only 3 fish per day longer than 17" may be harvested.

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
Saugeye (Walleye x Sauger Hybrids)	6	14"
Hybrid Striped Bass (White Bass x Striped Bass Hybrids)	No limit under 17"; 3 fish 17" and longer	

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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