

CEDAR LAKE

2025 FISHERIES FACT SHEET

LOCATION: Cedar Lake is located five miles southwest of Carbondale in Jackson County. The City of Carbondale boat access area is located at the end of Cedar Creek Road off of Old Route 51 South. Another boat access area can be found south of Murphysboro off of State Route 127. There is a 10 HP motor limit on Cedar Lake. Boat trailer parking areas can fill up quickly during the peak spring and fall fishing seasons especially on weekends.

DESCRIPTION: Cedar Lake is 1750 acres in size with a maximum depth of 60 feet. The northern half of the shoreline is owned by the City of Carbondale. The southern half of the shoreline is surrounded by Shawnee National Forest which is owned by the US Forest Service. There is no marina on Cedar Lake.

STATUS OF THE SPORT FISHERY – The following is a brief summary of the major sport fish species based the Illinois Department of Natural Resources annual fish population surveys.

Largemouth Bass (LMB) - Anglers are encouraged to keep their daily limit of 5 LMB under 14 inches to help thin out the smaller LMB at Cedar Lake. This will increase growth rates, allow more LMB to reach the protected slot limit, and lead to more trophy-sized LMB in the future. During the 2024 spring electrofishing sample LMB were collected at a rate of 176 fish/hr. The catch rate of LMB <14 inches was 117 fish/hr which represents the highest rate since 2013. Sixty-six percent of all bass collected were below 14 inches which represents the highest percentage since 2015. If anglers don't start removing some of these smaller bass the overall bass population is trending towards being a stunted population with too many small skinny bass and fewer and fewer larger bass. The catch rate of bass over 18 inches was 21 fish/hr which was down from the 2023 rate of 31 fish/hr and lower than the ten year average of 25 fish/hr. The largest bass collected in the 2024 survey was 22 inches and weighed just over 7 pounds.

Striped Bass (STB) - STB are stocked into Cedar Lake when available. A total of 2100 STB (5.4 inches) were stocked in October 2024. One 22 inch STB was collected in the 2024 survey. Striped bass are an open-water fish and are rarely collected during IDNR annual surveys. A tagging study is now underway at Cedar Lake. If you catch a floy-tagged STB please contact IDNR Fisheries Biologist Shawn Hirst at 618-559-5009 (or email at Shawn.Hirst@illinois.gov). Please provide tag number (5 digits), length, and if you kept or released the STB. If releasing the STB please do not remove the tag.

Crappie – Cedar Lake has an excellent crappie population consisting of both black and white crappie. Of the 296 crappie collected in the 2024 spring survey, 72% were over 9 inches, 45% were over 10 inches, and 9% were over 12 inches. The largest crappie collected in the 2024 survey was a black crappie that measured 14 inches and weighed 1.5 pounds.

Bluegill Sunfish – Despite the high density largemouth bass population, the bluegill population structure can only be described as average. A few bluegill over 8 inches were collected in the 2024 spring survey.

Redear Sunfish – While the bluegill population can only be described as average, the redear population is outstanding for a larger lake. Fifty-nine percent of the redear sunfish collected during the 2024 spring survey were over 8 inches. Thirty-three percent were over 9 inches. The largest redear sunfish collected was 11 inches and weighed 1.1 pounds.

Catfish – No channel catfish were collected in the 2024 survey. One flathead catfish (10 inches) was collected in the 2024 survey. Neither catfish species have ever been collected in great numbers in previous annual surveys. No channel catfish were stocked in 2024.

Fishing regulations:

Species	Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
Largemouth Bass	5 under 14” and 1 over 18”	14-18 inch protected slot (no possession)
Striped, White or Hybrid Bass	3	17”
White, Black, Hybrid Crappie	25	None
All Fish	2 Pole and Line Fishing Only	

FISHING TOURNAMENTS: Permits for fishing tournaments are required from the City of Carbondale and can be obtained by contacting the City of Carbondale/Lake Manager – Cedar Lake 618-549-8441 beginning on January 2 of each year. No IDNR fish tournament permits will be issued until a City of Carbondale permit has been obtained. Tournaments are limited to a 20 boat maximum with one tournament per day per ramp.

FISH ATTRACTORS – A map of the 30 permanent Cedar Lake fish attractor locations can be obtained via email by sending a request to Shawn.Hirst@Illinois.gov

GENERAL FISHING INFORMATION – With a 10 HP motor limit and no swimming allowed (except at a designated beach), Cedar Lake receives very little recreational boat traffic throughout the year. However, parking at the two boat ramps can be a problem during peak fishing months in the spring and fall especially on the weekends.

PHONE NUMBERS: Illinois Department of Natural Resources Fish Biologist – Shawn Hirst 618-559-5009. City of Carbondale/Lake Manager – Cedar Lake 618-549-8441.