



BRAIDWOOD LAKE

FISHERIES FACT SHEET

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources has the responsibility to provide diverse, outdoor recreation for the citizens of, and visitors to the State of Illinois. One means of providing for recreational opportunity has been to lease valuable recreational land and water from utility companies. Braidwood Lake is one such area operated by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources in cooperation with the Exelon Company.

LOCATION: Braidwood Lake is located approximately 1¼ miles south of the Village of Braidwood adjacent to U.S. Route 53.

DESCRIPTION: Braidwood Lake is a 2,640 acre, partially perched cooling lake. When impounded in 1981 several old strip-mine pits were flooded within the lake proper. No horsepower limitations; maximum speed limit is 40 mph except in designated "no wake" and "hazard" areas; working gasoline engine required as main propulsion unit; boats under 14' are not recommended. County Line Road Access (south access) has a four-lane concrete boat ramp with 35 car/trailer parking. An additional 75+ car lot is located adjacent to the ramp area. Cemetery Road Access (north access) has a two-lane concrete boat ramp with parking for 35 car/trailers. A majority of the shoreline is open to bank fishing, and these areas are clearly marked. Access to the interior islands by anglers is prohibited. Supported by a thriving gizzard and threadfin shad forage base, Braidwood Lake offers anglers a variety of fish species as well as structural elements. Steep drop-offs, rock piles, man-made habitat, current and thermal breaks and woody cover are all present. The nature of this lake requires extreme care in boating and a good topographic map is well worth the expense.

HISTORY & STATUS of the SPORT FISHERY: Braidwood Lake was constructed in the late 1970's and impounded with water pumped from the Kankakee River in 1980-81. Fisheries management activities were initiated in 1978 involving the strip-mine lakes and dry lake basin. From the late '70's to the present time, Braidwood Lake has been supplementally stocked with a variety of warm- and coolwater fish species. These included largemouth and smallmouth bass, blue catfish, pure striped bass, walleye, crappie and tiger muskie. Intensive monitoring programs documented the failure of coolwater stockings to create a significant fishery, which is likely due to extreme water temperatures which are common during the summer months. Further increases in electrical output at the generating station have resulted in even warmer water temperatures during the past summers. Once supporting a variety of rooted and emergent aquatic plant species, Braidwood Lake is now dominated by an almost year 'round phytoplankton bloom. In an excellent example of cooperation between corporate partners, constituents and the IDNR, a fish habitat enhancement project which was initiated in 2007 has continued on an annual basis. This project, which is funded by Exelon's Braidwood Generating Station, has resulted in the placement of several hundred man-made habitat units and 2,000+ live water willow plugs at various locations throughout the lake.

Largemouth Bass: The loss of rooted aquatic plants has had an adverse effect upon the largemouth bass population. In recent years, bass sampled in fall surveys tended to be of larger average size but the number of fish collected began to decline. In 2005 largemouth bass electrofishing catch rates fell to 0.17/minute which was an all-time low. To augment the shortfall in natural production of largemouth bass, a supplemental stocking program was initiated in 2006. Since the inception of this stocking program a total of more than 311,000 largemouth bass fingerlings have been released. Size at stocking has ranged from 2.3 to 5.6" but has averaged close to 4". Results from the most recent biennial fall survey were somewhat encouraging as although the catch rates declined slightly the density of bass which were 12 inches and larger was almost three times greater than the previous survey. Nearly one-half of the collection was comprised of bass 6 inches and less which indicates the contribution of stocked fish. Anglers are restricted to a daily limit of one (1) black bass 18 inches or larger. The impact of the restrictive harvest limit, aggressive stocking program and habitat enhancement project is being observed through increased collections of all sizes of bass as well as an increase in larger fish.

Smallmouth bass have been incidental in most all IDNR sampling efforts.

Bluegill: A mainstay for bank anglers, this species is present in good numbers with quality fish in fair abundance. The average size for bluegills declined slightly from the 2007 to the 2009 survey.

Channel Catfish: While the population remains dominated by younger fish, the average size has increased over the past several years and is much improved from the late 1990's when the population was comprised primarily of smaller fish. Channel catfish collected in the 2009 fall survey averaged 11.8". **Flathead catfish** are present as well, but their population at the present time is fairly low. **Blue catfish** have been stocked on multiple occasions and are beginning to be caught with some regularity.

FISHING REGULATIONS: Site specific angling regulations. Two pole and line fishing only, all other statewide regulations apply.

Species	Daily Creel Limit	Minimum Length Limit
All Fish	2 pole and line only	
Largemouth/Smallmouth Bass	1	18"
White/Black Crappie	10	none

Swimming, wading, water skiing and sail boating are prohibited.

Braidwood Lake is open to fishing daily from 6:00 a.m. till sunset from March 1 until ten days prior to the opening of the waterfowl season (central zone). Portions of Braidwood Lake are restricted to unauthorized access; these areas are clearly marked. Bank fishing boundaries are posted. Since windy conditions can produce treacherous waves, the lake can be closed at the discretion of the site superintendent.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Site Superintendent
Mazonia/Braidwood State Fish and Wildlife Area
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Braceville, Illinois 60914
815/237-0063