

# O'Malley's Ponds Population Survey



The newest fishing lake within the Forest Preserves of Cook County, O'Malley Ponds, were acquired by the District in 2005. Located in Sauk Village at the intersection of Sauk Trail and Burnham Avenue, O'Malley Ponds consist of 3 ponds. Fishing is permitted in the South Pond on the south side of Sauk Trail and both the Central and North Ponds on the north side of Sauk Trail with a total of 21-acres of fishable water. A four pond is located nearby and is private property. The fish population of O'Malley Ponds consists mostly of Largemouth Bass and Bluegill with smaller numbers Yellow Perch, crappie, and bullheads. Grass Pickerel, a small relative of Northern Pike can also be found in the ponds and are easily mistaken for young Northern.

## Fish Population Survey

Fish population surveys are periodically conducted on Forest Preserves lakes in order to assess the health of the lake and the fish population in it. Surveys last anywhere from a few hours to a few days depending on the size of the lake.

Water samples are collected and analyzed for each survey. The information collected over the years will show trends in the lake's health. If any unusual readings are found, further tests may be done, or the Illinois DNR and EPA may be asked to investigate.

Fish are collected during surveys to assess the health of the population. Several methods are used to collect fish, these include experimental gill nets, Fyke or trap nets and the use of an electro-fishing boat. All fish collected are measured, weighed and a scale sample is collected when applicable. These scale samples are used to age the fish. All fish are then returned to the lake when possible.

The information listed below was collected during the most recent survey. It is only a snapshot in time. Many factors such as temperature, wind, rain and even moonlight can affect the species and number of fish that are collected. The Forest Preserves' Fisheries Section looks at data from many years when assessing a lake's fish population and assumptions from just one year of data therefore should not be made.

The dates of the survey along with the type of equipment used and the length of time it was fished is listed below. The "Total Population" tables & charts show all species collected and includes not only game fish but also forage fish. A healthy balanced population of forage fish and predatory (game) fish is needed in order to support a healthy overall fish population. Ideally, 30 to 40% of a lake's total fish population should be made up of forage fish in order to support a healthy predatory fish population. The species of forage fish varies from lake to lake, Gizzard Shad may be the main forage fish in one lake, while Bluegill/sunfish may be the main forage fish in another

Individual species tables are included only for the game fish that were collected. Game fish are those fish most sought after by anglers.

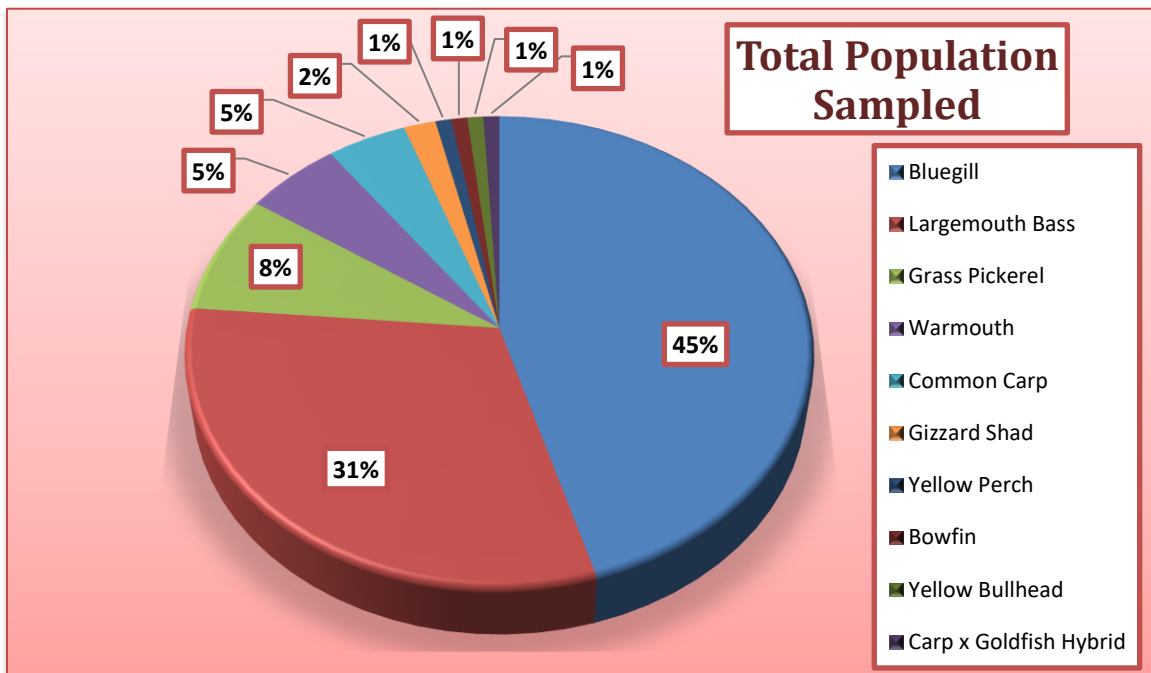
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**Date of survey: October 4, 2023**  
**Electro-fishing time: 30 minutes**  
**0 Fyke nets fished: 0 hours**  
**0 feet of gill nets fished: 0 hours**

## Total Population

Species	Number	Percent
Bluegill	50	45.45%
Largemouth Bass	34	30.91%
Grass Pickerel	9	8.18%
Warmouth	6	5.45%
Common Carp	5	4.55%
Gizzard Shad	2	1.82%
Yellow Perch	1	0.91%
Bowfin	1	0.91%
Yellow Bullhead	1	0.91%
Common Carp x Goldfish Hybrid	1	0.91%
<b>Total</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>100.00%</b>



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## Bluegill

½-Inch Group	Number Collected	% of Population	Average Weight lbs.	Age
2.0	2	4.00%	0.009	0+
2.5	1	2.00%	0.01	0+
3.0	18	36.00%	0.02	0 - 1+
3.5	19	38.00%	0.03	1+
4.0	5	10.00%	0.04	2+
4.5	4	8.00%	0.05	2+
5.0	1	2.00%	0.06	2+
<b>Totals</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		

## Largemouth Bass

½-Inch Group	Number Collected	% of Population	Average Weight lbs.	Age
3.0	1	2.94%	0.009	0+
3.5	1	2.94%	0.01	0+
-	-	-	-	-
4.5	1	2.94%	0.04	1+
-	-	-	-	-
10.5	1	2.94%	0.48	2+
11.0	1	2.94%	0.53	2+
-	-	-	-	-
12.0	5	14.71%	0.80	3+
12.5	4	11.76%	0.95	3+
13.0	1	2.94%	0.96	3+
13.5	6	17.65%	1.05	3 - 4+
14.0	5	14.71%	1.44	4+
14.5	1	2.94%	1.51	4+
15.0	2	5.88%	1.60	4 - 5+
15.5	2	5.88%	1.72	5+
16.0	3	8.82%	1.86	5+
<b>Totals</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>99.99%</b>		

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## Grass Pickerel

1/2-Inch Group	Number Collected	% of Population	Average Weight lbs.	Age
5.0	1	11.11%	0.02	NA+
-	-	-	-	-
12.0	2	22.22%	0.34	2+
12.5	3	33.33%	0.45	3+
-	-	-	-	-
13.5	1	11.11%	0.51	3+
14.0	2	22.22%	0.55	3+
<b>Totals</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>99.99%</b>		

## Warmouth

1/2-Inch Group	Number Collected	% of Population	Average Weight lbs.	Age
2.5	1	16.67%	0.002	0+
3.0	5	83.33%	0.02	1 - 2+
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		

## Common Carp

1/2-Inch Group	Number Collected	% of Population	Average Weight lbs.	Age
20.0	1	20.00%	5.19	4+
-	-	-	-	-
22.5	1	20.00%	5.15	5+
23.0	1	20.00%	5.95	5+
-	-	-	-	-
24.0	1	20.00%	7.25	5+
-	-	-	-	-
26.0	1	20.00%	9.79	6+
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		

## Other Species collected

Species	Number	Length	Weight	Age
Yellow Perch	1	7.5	0.14	1+
Bowfin	1	26.5	5.44	4+
Yellow Bullhead	1	6.5	0.11	NA

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## Fisheries Survey Overview

The 2023 survey of O'Malley's Ponds was conducted on the north pond only and then only at the west end of the pond. The depth and downed timber make it difficult to sample the east and south parts of the pond. Heavy vegetation also made it difficult to collect fish while electro-fishing.

Largemouth Bass and Bluegill were what we would expect from a pond of this size. The Bluegill were of normal size for a small pond and large numbers of young-of-year (YOY) fish were observed but not collected. Bass were collected in all age classes and ranged from YOY fish up to 16-inch fish. Many bass were not collected due to the heavy aquatic vegetation.

O'Malley's Ponds is one of the best lakes in the Forest Preserves of Cook County to find Grass Pickerel. Pickerel are relatives of Northern Pike and are the smallest member of the Esox family. They are often caught on small lures or minnow and are mistaken for young pike by anglers.

Local Anglers report catching nice size crappie early in the spring, but none were collected during the 2023 sampling. Crappie are more often caught using Fyke or gill nets which were not used due to the small sampling area and thick vegetation.

These ponds still need to be explored by the Fisheries Section and area angler in order to get a better understanding of this fishery.