

# Turtlehead Lake Population Survey



Located in Palos Heights on the west side of Harlem Ave. ¼ miles south of 135<sup>th</sup> St. This 18-acre site includes Turtlehead Lake, Turtlehead Pond, and West Pond. Turtlehead Lake is the deepest at 14.6 feet, Turtlehead Pond is 11.5 feet deep and West Pond comes in at 4.3 feet deep. Largemouth Bass, Bluegill, sunfish, bullheads, and crappie can be found in these ponds. Designated ice fishing lake.

## 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.

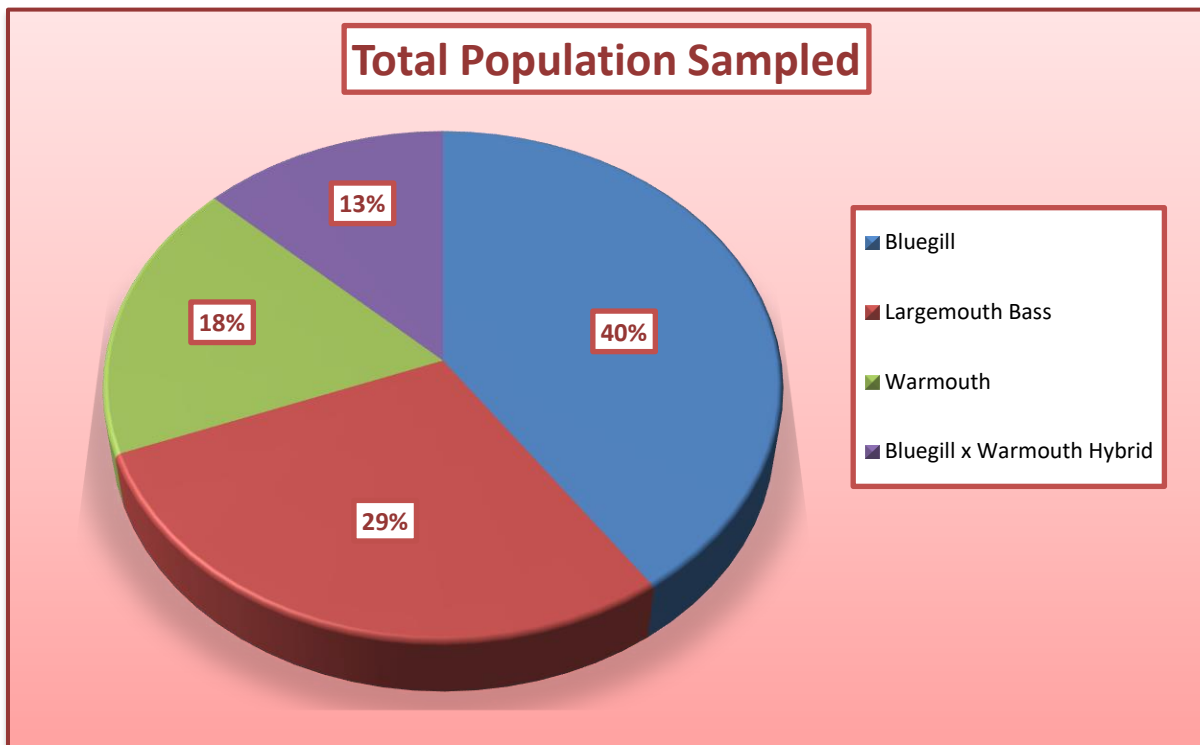
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Date of survey: July 5, 2023  
Electro-fishing time: 25 minutes  
0 Fyke nets fished: 0 hours  
0 feet gill nets fished: 0 hours

## Total Population

Species	Number	Percent
Bluegill	81	40.30%
Largemouth Bass	58	28.86%
Warmouth	36	17.91%
Bluegill x Warmouth Hybrid	26	12.94%
<b>Total</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>100.01%</b>



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## Bluegill

1/2-Inch Group	Number Collected	% of Population	Average Weight lbs.	Age
1.5	5	6.17%	0.004	0+
2.0	5	6.17%	0.007	0 - 1+
2.5	13	16.05%	0.004	1+
3.0	31	38.27%	0.02	2+
3.5	4	4.94%	0.03	2+
4.0	1	1.23%	0.04	2+
4.5	3	3.70%	0.05	2 - 3+
5.0	8	9.88%	0.08	3 - 4+
5.5	4	4.94%	0.10	3 - 4+
6.0	2	2.47%	0.15	4+
6.5	5	6.17%	0.18	4+
<b>Totals</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>99.99%</b>		

## Largemouth Bass

1/2-Inch Group	Number Collected	% of Population	Average Weight lbs.	Age
3.0	4	6.90%	0.01	0 - 1+
3.5	2	3.45%	0.02	1+
4.0	5	8.62%	0.03	1+
4.5	4	6.90%	0.04	1+
5.0	3	5.17%	0.05	1 - 2+
5.5	1	1.72%	0.07	1+
-	-	-	-	-
6.5	2	3.45%	0.22	1+
-	-	-	-	-
9.0	2	3.45%	0.37	2+
9.5	2	3.45%	0.39	2+
10.0	1	1.72%	0.45	3+
10.5	1	1.72%	0.55	3+
11.0	8	13.79%	0.62	3+
11.5	6	10.34%	0.70	3 - 4+
12.0	9	15.52%	0.83	4+
12.5	2	3.45%	0.84	4+
13.0	2	3.45%	1.04	5+
13.5	1	1.72%	1.05	5+
14.0	2	3.45%	1.26	5+
-	-	-	-	-
18.0	1	1.72%	2.82	7+
<b>Totals</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>99.99%</b>		

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## Warmouth

½-Inch Group	Number Collected	% of Population	Average Weight lbs.	Age
2.0	1	2.78%	0.002	0+
2.5	1	2.78%	0.02	0+
3.0	7	19.44%	0.03	1+
3.5	2	5.56%	0.04	2+
4.0	3	8.33%	0.05	2+
4.5	1	2.78%	0.07	2+
5.0	7	19.44%	0.11	2 - 3+
5.5	2	5.56%	0.13	3 - 4+
6.0	4	11.11%	0.17	4+
6.5	7	19.44%	0.28	4+
7.0	1	2.78%	0.29	5+
<b>Totals</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		

## Bluegill x Warmouth Hybrid

½-Inch Group	Number Collected	% of Population	Average Weight lbs.	Age
4.5	1	3.85%	0.06	3+
5.0	8	30.77%	0.08	3+
5.5	12	46.15%	0.11	3+
6.0	5	19.23%	0.16	4+
<b>Totals</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.00%</b>		

## Stocking

The Forest Preserves of Cook County works closely with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources to stock fish within the Forest Preserves lakes. The decision to stock fish and the number of fish stocked is based on many factors including but not limited to type of species, size of fish stocked, size of the lake and type of stocking. The Forest Preserves of Cook County must follow State of Illinois regulation regarding the introduction and stocking of fish. All requests to stock a new species into a District lake must go through the State's Management Recommendation Committee.

Most stocking fall under one of three categories, introduction, supplemental and put-and-take. Introduction stockings are the introduction of a new species within an existing lake or the stocking of a new body of water. Supplemental stockings are the stocking of species already in a lake and are used to supplement a species that may not successively reproduce on its own or has been overfished. Fish stocked in a put-and-take stocking are catchable size fish.

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## Size of Fish Stocked

Most of the fish stocked in the lakes of the Forest Preserves of Cook County are young-of-the-year and are provided by the IDNR Hatcheries. Fish from the hatcheries are stocked upon availability and are funded by your fishing licenses.

These fish range in size from 2 to 3-inches for Largemouth Bass and 1/2 to 3/4-inch for Bluegill.

Channel Catfish are stocked at around 6-inches in most lakes.

The IDNR suspended the production, rearing and stocking of Northern Pike in 2017, Northern stocking resumed in 2020 and were stocked in the 7 to 9-inch range. Muskellunge range from 10 to 14-inches and are stocked in the Main Pool of Busse Reservoir intermittently.

Walleye fingerlings from the IDNR are 2 to 3-inches and the Walleye from the Tampier Walleye Propagation Program are stocked as fingerlings and/or fry.

Rainbow Trout are stocked in the 1/2 to 1-pound range. Trout stockings are funded by your trout stamps and the FPCC. Spring trout season opens on the 1st Saturday in April, and the fall season opens on the 3rd Saturday in October. \* S = Spring, F = Fall

\*\*Due to the abrupt closing of the hatchery that supplied the IDNR with catchable Channel Catfish and Hybrid Sunfish for the IDNR's Urban Fishing Program, the IDNR was unable to stock Channel Catfish at Cermak Quarry, Flatfoot Lake and Schiller Pond. The IDNR was able to procure Bluegill x Redear Sunfish Hybrids for these lakes, but the exact number of fish is unavailable.

Species	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Bluegill	-	15,000	-	-	

## Fisheries Survey Overview

Bluegill made up 40% of the total fish population sampled in 2023 with almost 72% of this population under 4.0-inches. Thousands of similar sized Bluegill were seen but not collected during the survey. Combined with the 18% Warmouth and 13% hybrid sunfish populations, there is plenty of forage for Turtlehead Lake's bass population and area anglers.

Turtlehead Lake has a very large Largemouth Bass population. Unfortunately, many of these bass are under the 14.0-inch legal size limit. This population is still recovering from a major fish kill that occurred several years ago. Many of the bass collected are in the 11.0 to 13.0-inch range. Over the next few years many of these fish should be of keeper size, providing area anglers with a nice bass fishery.

Shortly after the 2023 survey, Turtlehead Lake suffered another summer fish kill. This fish kill was minor with most of the fish lost being young sunfish and a few older bass. The fishery of Turtlehead Lake is still healthy with good numbers of catchable sunfish and Largemouth Bass still available to area anglers.