

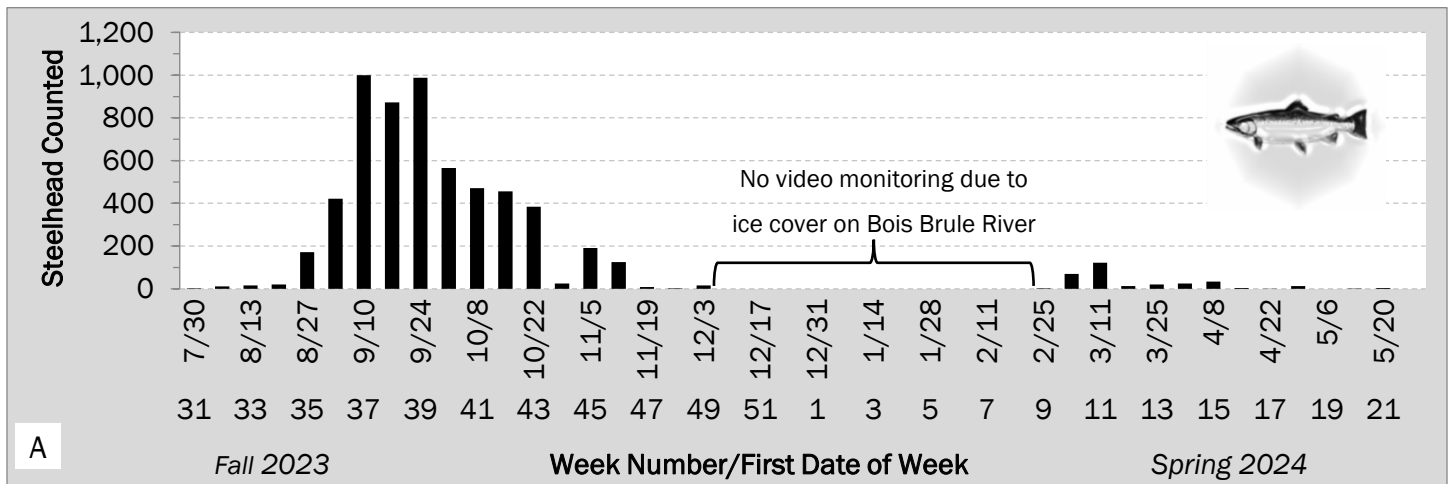
WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

2023 - 2024 Bois Brule River Steelhead Run

Douglas County, Wisconsin

Fall 2023 Count	Spring 2024 Count	Total Wild Steelhead Run Count
5,750	311	6,061

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) monitored the steelhead run with digital video equipment at the fishway window during fall 2023 and spring 2024. [Chart A](#) shows steelhead upstream migration timing (i.e., phenology). As typical, most steelhead arrived in the fall and overwintered in the river. Atypical however were the environmental conditions that likely influenced fall and spring phenology and the spring count. The considerably dry summer of 2023 was followed by above-average September rainfall and runoff in the region, which was coincident with a mid-September migration peak. Winter 2023-2024 was largely warm and dry with minimal regional snowpack, negligible runoff and low river water levels. Ice-out occurred in mid-February, much sooner than the typical mid-March ice-out timeframe. The early March migration peak occurred nearly three weeks before the early-season fishing opener.



This year's 6,061 steelhead, along with those counted since video monitoring began in 1990, are shown in [Chart B](#). The 33-year average is 6,189. The population continues to be balanced, self-sustaining and supportive of an action-oriented fishery with harvest opportunities. Nearly half of all steelhead in the 2023-2024 run ranged from 20 to 25 inches long, weighed three to five pounds and were four to five years old. While 36 percent of the run exceeded the minimum legal length limit of 26 inches and weighed from six to nine pounds, eight percent of the run consisted of three-year-old "jacks" that were 12 to 17 inches long and one to two pounds. This naturally reproducing, spring-spawning population typically fluctuates between 3,500 and 8,500 fish relative to variable environments in the Bois Brule River and Lake Superior.

