

# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## 2024 Forestville Millpond Survey Summary, Door County

WATERBODY IDENTIFICATION CODE: 95700

Forestville Millpond is a 65-acre impoundment of the Ahnapee River located in southern Door County. The Millpond has a maximum depth of 6 feet, an average depth of 2 feet and is in an agriculture dominated watershed (Door County SWCD 2018). Historically the fish community found in the Millpond has altered between one dominated by northern pike, largemouth bass, yellow perch, black crappie and bluegill to one dominated by bullhead and common carp (Lychwick 1984).

Records indicate that the first dam creating the Forestville Millpond was constructed in 1877 and the dam in its current form was reconstructed in 1982 (Door County SWCD 1996). Following reconstruction of the dam in 1982, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) chemically treated the millpond using rotenone to remove undesirable fish species (Lychwick 1984). Following the rotenone treatment the millpond was restocked with largemouth bass, smallmouth bass, muskellunge and northern pike (Table 1). Initially the efforts appeared to be successful but high nutrient loads coupled with the shallow nature of the Millpond led to poor water quality and frequent winterkills affecting the fish community (Door County SWCD 1996). DNR electrofishing surveys done in 2008 and 2016 indicated that largemouth bass, northern pike and panfish were present but the fish community was dominated by common carp indicating that water quality may still have been an issue (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016).

*Table 1. Stocking summary for the Forestville Flowage, Door County from 1983 to 2024.*

Stocking Year	Species	Age Class	No. Stocked	Avg. Length (in)
2022	BLUEGILL	LARGE FINGERLING	66,830	1
2022	LARGEMOUTH BASS	LARGE FINGERLING	2,339	2.7
2021	BLUEGILL	LARGE FINGERLING	46,960	0.75
2021	LARGEMOUTH BASS	LARGE FINGERLING	2,350	3.3
1993	LARGEMOUTH BASS	FINGERLING	7,000	1
1992	NORTHERN PIKE	FINGERLING	2,830	5.5
1992	LARGEMOUTH BASS	FINGERLING	3,250	1
1991	LARGEMOUTH BASS	FINGERLING	7,000	2
1991	NORTHERN PIKE	FINGERLING	360	7.9
1990	NORTHERN PIKE	FRY	100,000	1
1987	NORTHERN PIKE	FINGERLING	975	9
1986	NORTHERN PIKE	FINGERLING	325	9
1986	SMALLMOUTH BASS	FINGERLING	2,000	3
1985	MUSKELLUNGE	FRY	65,000	1
1985	LARGEMOUTH BASS	ADULT	20	12
1985	NORTHERN PIKE	FINGERLING	325	9
1983	NORTHERN PIKE	FINGERLING	375	11

In November 2019, a drawdown of the Forestville Millpond was initiated in an effort to increase water depth, control aquatic invasive plants, improve water quality, and reduce the common carp population. The Millpond was gradually filled beginning in September

2021. During the fall of 2021 and 2022, the DNR stocked largemouth bass and bluegill into the millpond in an effort to restore the fishery (Table 1).

On May 8, 2024, the DNR conducted an SE2 (spring electrofishing) survey on the Forestville Millpond. The goal of the survey was to assess the fish populations in the millpond with the primary objective of assessing bass and panfish populations. Using a boomshocker electrofishing boat, we surveyed 2 miles of shoreline at night. All fish that were encountered were netted except for common carp which were counted if the netters could touch the fish. During the survey, the water clarity was poor and may have influenced catch rates.

## LARGEMOUTH BASS

Largemouth bass were the most abundant gamefish species sampled from the Forestville Millpond in the 2024 survey. A total of 34 largemouth bass were captured (17.0/mi), ranging in length from 11.2 to 15.0 inches and averaging 13.0 inches (Figure 1). Nine of the largemouth bass sampled were greater than the 14-inch minimum size limit (26.5%). The 2024 catch rate (17.0/mi) increased from the 2016 survey (12.4/mi) but was less than the 2008 survey (24.4/mi) (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). The average length in the 2024 survey (13.0 inches) was less

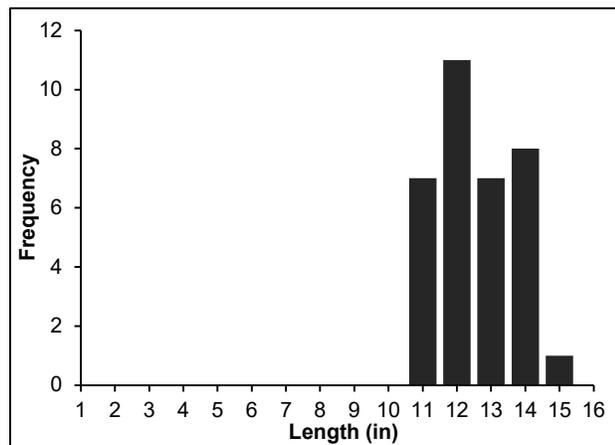


Figure 1. Length frequency of largemouth bass sampled from the Forestville Millpond in 2024.

than the 2008 and 2016 surveys (14.2, 14.4 inches, respectively) (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). No largemouth bass recruitment was detected during the 2024 survey (i.e., no young-of-year fish, and not several sizes that would indicate multiple ages or production year classes) and the population is likely comprised of age-2 and age-3 fish that were stocked in 2021 and 2022 following the drawdown. The surveys in 2008 and 2016 seemingly did a poor job of detecting largemouth bass recruitment in the Forestville Millpond but sampled bass from age-2 to age-8 (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). In the 2024 survey, the lack of recruitment may be a function of the relatively young population as age at maturity varies by waterbody, resource availability and sex, however, previous surveys suggest that there may be a bottleneck limiting largemouth bass recruitment in the Millpond (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). The stocked largemouth bass seem to be growing quite well. The statewide average length-at-age for largemouth bass is 6.5 at age-2 and 9 at age-3, thus it's likely the largemouth bass sampled in 2024 are age-2 (stocked 2022) and age-3 (stocked 2021) but growing faster than average due to the low density. Future surveys will likely be a better index of recruitment and evaluation of the stocking efforts.

## BLUEGILL

Bluegill were the most abundant panfish species sampled from the Forestville Millpond. A total of 11 bluegills were captured (5.5/mi). Sampled bluegills ranged in length from 6.4 to 7.9 inches and averaged 7.3 inches (Figure 2). Of the bluegills sampled, 100% were greater than 6.0 inches, and 64% were greater than 7.0 inches. The 2024 catch rate (5.5/mi) decreased from the 2016 survey (8.1/mi) but was higher than the 2008 survey (2.1/mi) (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). The average length in the 2024 survey (7.3 inches) was higher than the 2008 and 2016 surveys (4.7, 5.4 inches, respectively) (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). No bluegill recruitment was detected during the 2024 survey (i.e., no young-of-year fish, and not several sizes that would indicate multiple ages or production year classes) and the population is likely comprised of age-2 and age-3 fish that were stocked in 2021 and 2022 following the drawdown. While in low numbers, the surveys in 2008 and 2016 did indicate some level of recruitment with small fish being sampled (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). In this 2024 survey, the lack of recruitment may be a function of the relatively young population as age at maturity varies by waterbody, resource availability and sex, however and similar to largemouth bass, previous surveys suggest that there may be a bottleneck limiting bluegill recruitment in the Millpond (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). Bluegills were observed going through the spawning process in the Forestville Millpond in 2023. The stocked bluegills seem to be growing quite well. The statewide average length-at-age for bluegill is 4.0 inches at age-2 and 4.8 inches at age-3, thus it's likely the bluegill sampled in 2024 are age-2 (stocked 2022) and age-3 (stocked 2021) but growing faster than average due to the low density. Future surveys will likely be a better index of recruitment and evaluation of the stocking efforts.

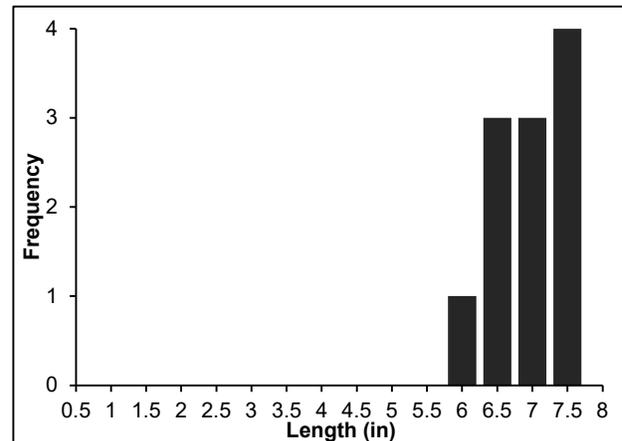


Figure 2. Length frequency of bluegills sampled from the Forestville Millpond in 2024.

## NORTHERN PIKE

A total of eight northern pike were sampled during the survey on the Forestville Millpond (4.0/mi). Sampled pike ranged in length from 18.7 to 24.0 inches and averaged 20.6 inches (Figure 3). There is no minimum length regulation for northern pike in the Forestville Millpond. The 2024 catch rate (4.0/mi) increased from the 2008 and 2016 surveys (1.7/mi, 1.7/mi, respectively) (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). The average length in the 2024 survey (20.6 inches) was less than the

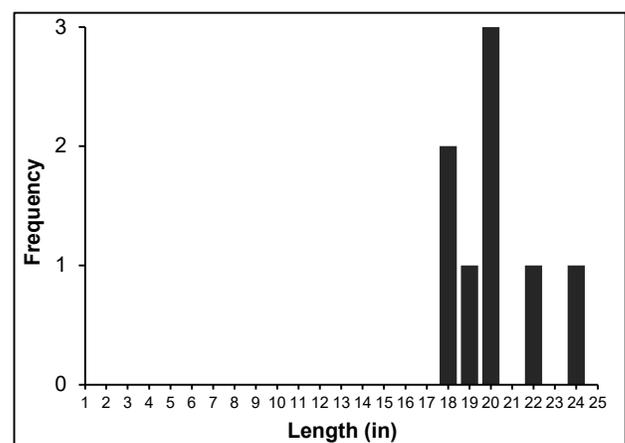


Figure 3. Length frequency of northern pike sampled from the Forestville Millpond in 2024.

2008 survey (22.2 inches) but higher than the 2016 survey (18.6 inches) and the length ranges sampled were similar among surveys (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). No northern pike were stocked in the Forestville Millpond following the drawdown.

## **OTHER SPECIES**

Like previous surveys that have been done on the Forestville Millpond, common carp continue to dominate the fish community (Hogler 2008; Hogler 2016). Common carp were not netted during the survey but were counted if netters could touch the fish. With >115 counted (57.5/mi), and many more seen, common carp were the most abundant species detected in our survey. Nearly all common carp encountered were relatively small with most ranging from about 8 to 16 inches. No common carp were stocked in the Forestville Millpond following the drawdown. One pumpkinseed and one common shiner were sampled during the 2024 survey.

## **REFERENCES**

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### **For more information please contact:**

**Logan Sikora**

DNR Senior Fisheries Biologist

110 S. Neenah Avenue, Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235

logan.sikora@wisconsin.gov