

## **Becks Pond**

25.6 acres

Newark, DE

### ***Fish community***

Becks Pond is one of the most heavily fished ponds in the state due to its location within Delaware's most populated county and the limited number of public freshwater fishing ponds in the general area. Thus, an active fisheries management program has been in effect for many years. The most recent assessment of the fish population was conducted via electrofishing by the Division of Fish and Wildlife during the fall of 2013 and 2014. The Largemouth Bass population has experienced variability the last few years and the assessment revealed a low density bass population. Catch rates were highest for 12-15" bass, but very few bass >15" were observed. Relative weight (measure of condition or 'plumpness') was good for almost all size groups. Gaps in size distribution indicated sporadic spawning and recruitment but strong year classes were noted during past surveys and bass fry were observed in 2013. Seine surveys conducted in the summer of 2014 revealed successful reproduction by both bass and Bluegill in 2014. The Bluegill population has consistently been represented by a variety of size groups but very few fish larger than 8". Both White and Black Crappie occur in Becks Pond with White Crappie usually attaining a larger size. Although crappie are not very abundant, anglers frequently report citation sized ( $\geq 1$  lb or  $\geq 10$ " ) fish to Delaware's Sportfishing Live Release Program (<http://de.gov/livereleaseprogram>). Anglers have also reported catching a few citation sized Largemouth Bass ( $\geq 5$  lbs or  $\geq 20$ " ) and Chain Pickerel ( $\geq 4$  lbs or  $\geq 24$ " ). Other species that occur in the pond include Pumpkinseed, Yellow Perch, Gizzard Shad, American Eel, Brown Bullhead, Creek Chubsucker, Golden Shiner and Northern Snakehead.

Northern Snakehead, a native fish of China and Russia, was first documented in 2010 when a kayaker was bit by an adult that was protecting a school of fry. This species has now become established in the pond as evidenced by large schools of fry that are observed each spring.



Individuals that are caught are removed from the pond because of the potential this species has to impact the fish community. Anglers are encouraged to also remove, kill and report snakehead catches to the Division at (302) 739-9914 or [Edna.Stetzar@state.de.us](mailto:Edna.Stetzar@state.de.us). It is illegal to transport, possess, purchase or sell live Northern Snakehead in Delaware.

### ***Vegetation***

Aquatic vegetation, when not excessive, benefits the fish community by providing shelter and areas to forage. Spatterdock, also known as cow lily or yellow pond-lily, dominates the open-water areas of the pond in Belltown Run and Salem Run. There are also several beds in the large cove and upper end of the pond. At present, there are few submersed aquatic plants in the pond. Filamentous (strandlike) algae has dominated in recent years with very thick concentrations along the shoreline and around the spatterdock. The density of the algae can impede angling and boating by late summer/early fall. The Division has implemented some control measures but the algal species is resistant to most chemicals and hard to access in the shallow areas with a mechanical harvester. The algae growth is partly fueled by excessive nutrients in the pond. It is important for residents living in the watershed to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) that minimize the amount of nutrients entering the pond and nearby waterways via stormwater run-off. Best Management Practices used during lawn care is extremely important. For more information go to: <http://delawarelivablelawns.org/about.php>

**Special Conditions**

There is a minimum size limit of 15 inches and a possession limit of two fish per day for Largemouth Bass caught in Becks Pond. Fish may not be taken by bow and arrow due to New Castle County regulations. Gas motors are prohibited by the county. The pond is jointly managed by New Castle County and the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The adjacent parkland is managed by the county and has a playground, several picnic areas, and a pavilion. The county also maintains the parking lot and the mowing and trash collection.

Development within the watershed has caused water quality issues, including low dissolved oxygen during the summer in some portions of the pond. A technical working group comprised of representatives from state, federal, and county agencies as well as local residents was initiated in 2000. The work group determined that removal of a portion of the sediment layer is needed to improve water quality, but funding for the work has not been identified. The group continues to work towards raising awareness and garnering support to facilitate implementing measures to improve the conditions of the pond.

**Access**

New Castle County maintains the launching ramp and parking area. The parking area can accommodate a fair number of boats and trailers, but the launching ramp is best for small boats, kayaks and canoes. There is a pole marking the end of the ramp which drops off to deeper water. Shoreline access is available at many locations within the park along the eastern shore and across the dam. The remaining shoreline is in private ownership.



*The boat ramp and parking area of Becks Pond is located off of Salem Church Road, South of Newark.*



**STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!**  
Prevent the transport of nuisance species.  
Clean all recreational equipment.  
[www.ProtectYourWaters.net](http://www.ProtectYourWaters.net)

**When you leave a body of water:**

- Remove any visible mud, plants, fish or animals before transporting equipment.
- Eliminate water from equipment before transporting.
- Clean and dry anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, clothing, dogs, etc.).
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.



*Help us stop the spread of invasive species*

**(See Pond Map on next page)**

