

Beltzville

by Walt Dietz

State Park



photo-Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

Anglers and boaters in eastern Pennsylvania are blessed with a large waterway that provides lots of recreational opportunities. Beltzville Lake, Carbon County, is located right between the Fish & Boat Commission's Northeast and Southeast regions. The lake is a convenient location for big-water fishing and boating activities. It's a short drive from Lehigh, Hazleton or Allentown, and it's well worth the longer drive from areas like Wilkes-Barre, Scranton, Harrisburg, or Philadelphia—an hour or more, depending on where you live.

Beltzville Lake is part of Beltzville State Park and a cooperative effort between

several agencies. The lake was created and is maintained and operated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a 3,600-acre flood-control project on Pohopoco Creek. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources leases and manages the recreation on and around the lake.

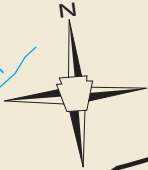
Beltzville Lake is 949 acres with nearly 20 miles of shoreline. This large area means plenty of elbow room for everyone, whether you prefer powerboating, quiet paddling or shore fishing. It's one of those long, thin-shaped lakes, typical of many manmade impoundments. The lake runs roughly east to west with the

southern shore etching a straight line. This shore also has steep sides and deep water. The lake's average depth is 42 feet. The maximum depth is 126 feet at normal pool. The northern shore has a more gradual slope with coves, bays and inlets. This diverse shoreline keeps the fishing and boating interesting.

Beltzville is a popular waterway with many local anglers. Anglers can pursue smallmouth bass, largemouth bass, brown trout, walleyes, muskellunge, chain pickerel, channel catfish and panfish (primarily yellow perch, bluegills, and pumpkinseeds). Some fish species are stocked as fingerlings, and they

BELTZVILLE STATE PARK

Map courtesy of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources



- Park Office
- Lifeguard Station
- Picnic Area
- Restrooms
- Boat Rental
- Picnic Pavilion
- Public Phone
- Food Concession
- Environmental Interpretive Center
- Playground
- Swimming
- Amphitheater
- Boat Launch
- Showerhouse/Restrooms
- Overlook
- Hiking Trail
- Cross-country Skiing
- Unpaved Road
- State Park No Hunting
- State Park Hunting
- No Wake Zone



TO PA TURNPIKE, (Interchange No 34) & US 209

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209

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can grow to large sizes, thanks to a good forage base of alewives.

Beltzville Lake lacks good spawning and nursery habitat, so it needs regular fingerling stockings. Fortunately, Beltzville is getting some help by way of the Commission's Adopt-a-Lake Program and Fish Habitat Improvement Plan. The Commission's Habitat Management Section and the Tamaqua Bass Club have been installing spawning and nursery structures over the last five years. These structures include porcupine brush cribs and rock-rubble humps. The porcupine cribs provide cover for spawning adult fish and young fish. The rock-rubble reefs provide forage habitat for baitfish and other invertebrates. Fish sometimes congregate around these areas and can be seen on electronic fish locators. Anglers should have some good fishing to look forward to on this lake thanks to these habitat improvements.

Perch, pickerel, smallmouth bass and largemouth bass provide the most consistent action. Anglers might also have some luck with brown trout, walleyes and striped bass. Some big striped bass have been caught in the lake in recent years, some nearly 40 pounds. The musky population is still developing and it may be a few years until their numbers and sizes increase. An occasional musky in the 40-inch range is caught.

Fish can be caught throughout the lake, but there are some spots that are more productive than others. Anglers can fish from shore or from boats. Two good spots are around the Preachers Camp and Pine Run Boat Access areas. The area around the powerline is also a great spot. These three spots seem to produce the best results if you want to hook up with a walleye, largemouth bass or striped bass. Boat anglers sometimes fish the area near the dam breast. The water is deepest around the dam and near the special-regulation ski area. Anglers also land some big channel catfish during the summer, when the water warms. During the past 10 years or so, downrigging in summer near the Pine Run access has become a popular fishing method for taking big brown trout.

During the summer, several oxygen zones develop, and there is a good zone in the depth range of 60 feet to 90 feet.

Anglers seem to have success with stickbaits, soft baits and live bait. Minnows and nightcrawlers are good choices. Anglers like to fish this lake in the early morning and evening hours during weekdays. Night fishing can also be very productive. Fishing the early morning and night shifts are good strategies, especially during the summer. Pleasure boating activity picks up when the weather gets warm. The lake gets busy during sunny afternoons, weekends and holidays, making the fishing more challenging.

During the summer, Beltzville is a favorite destination for many boaters and waterskiers. Lake users can enjoy the lake by canoe, kayak or motorboat. There are no horsepower restrictions, but boaters need to be aware of some special regulations. There is a 45 mph speed limit on the lake. Boats must also operate at slow, no-wake speed at Pine Run, Wild Creek and Pohopoco Creek bays. It is unlawful to operate a boat with inboard engines that have out-of-the-transom or straight-stack type exhausts (wet or dry). Sleeping on boats overnight is prohibited. Waterskiing is allowed only in a designated ski zone. A boat may not tow more than one water-ski device on weekends and holidays from the Saturday before Memorial Day through Labor Day.

Beltzville isn't just for the diehard angler or boater. It's a great place to take your family for a pleasant day-long outing in addition to some fishing. The park even hosts fishing and boating programs that are taught by Commission staff. Park visitors should contact the Fish & Boat Commission's Northeast Region or Beltzville State Park offices to learn more about these fishing and boating programs. ☐



Photo-Art Michaels

Largemouth bass provide some of Beltzville's most consistent action.

Walt Dietz is the Fish & Boat Commission Northeast Region aquatic resources program specialist. He thanks the area fisheries managers, habitat management biologists and waterways conservation officers who provided information for this article.

For more information

Visit these web sites to find directions or learn more about this lake:

www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/parks/beltzville.aspx

http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Fish_Boat/map/pfbcmaps/carbonmain.htm

Launch permits

Owners of unregistered, unpowered boats can now launch their boats at Fish & Boat Commission lakes and access areas and at Pennsylvania state parks if their boats display a current Fish & Boat Commission use permit decal or a PA State Parks launching or mooring decal. Visit the Commission's web site, www.fish.state.pa.us. On the main page (left side), click on "Boating" and navigate to "Issuing Agents for Unpowered Boat Launch Permits."