

33# Fishes

What species of fish live in the Class of 1918 Marsh?

To find out, we set 21 minnow traps in December 2012. We caught 3 species. A young and an adult bluntnose minnow were caught near the storm drain at the south end. A young pumpkinseed sunfish and green sunfish were caught in the open waters of the marsh.

So, this Marsh is not teeming with fishes.

Before University Bay Drive was built, the wetlands were connected to the lake during high waters and many fishes entered. Notably, a migration of northern pike came to spawn on flooded areas of sedges and other water plants. As they entered the marsh, northern pike were speared in abundance by Native Americans and later by early European settlers. Now University Bay Drive and the associated plumbing prevent this migration from occurring.

During winter, the marsh is a severe environment for fishes. The open waters are usually less than one foot deep. Little or no water remains between the mud and the underside of the ice. By midwinter, all dissolved oxygen is usually gone from this thin layer of water.

In the Class of 1918 Marsh, severe winter conditions and the loss of water access from Lake Mendota have resulted in a meager fish population. Three species were caught in our sampling. In comparison, 48 species of fish have been caught in the many habitats that Lake Mendota provides.