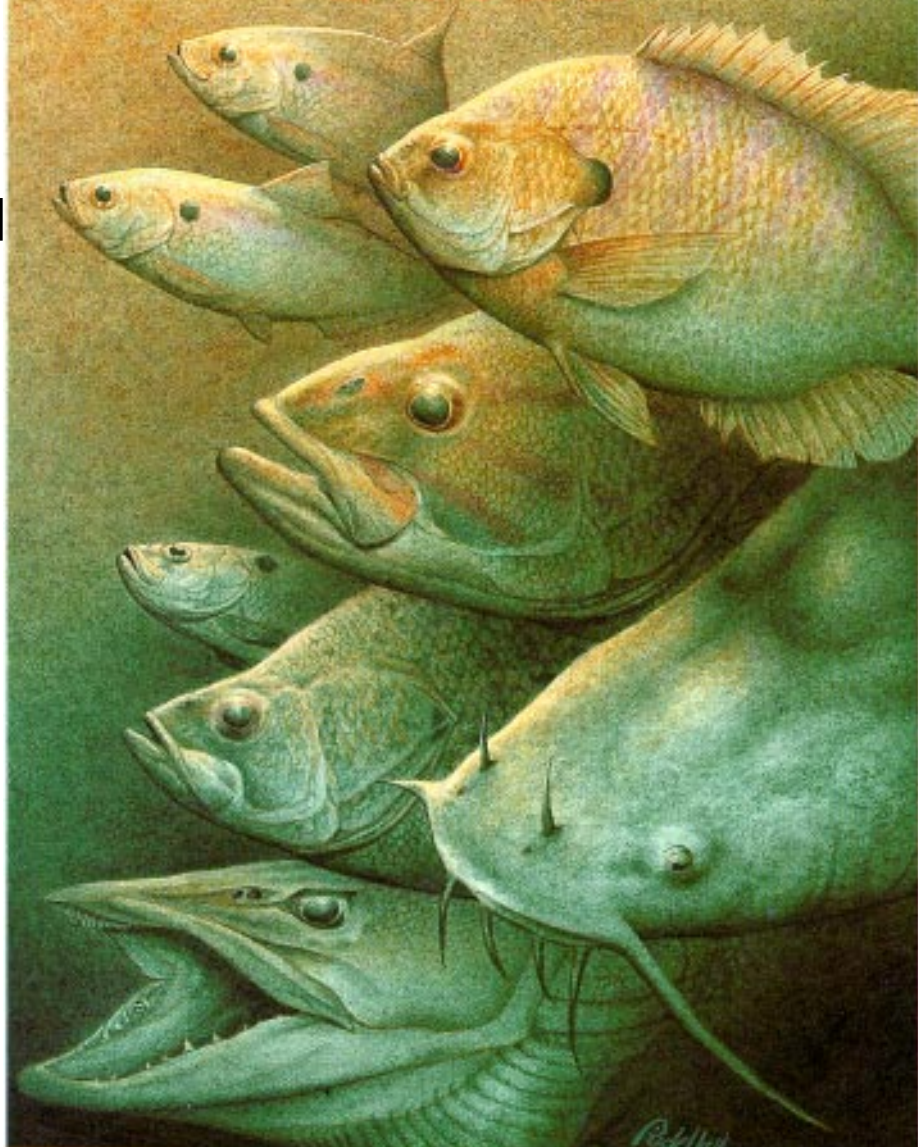


KENTUCKY FISH



Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources



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KENTUCKY FISH



Compiled by
Benjy T. Kinman
Fishery Program Coordinator
1993

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
Division of Fisheries
Pete W. Pfeiffer, Director

PREFACE

This booklet is intended to serve as a reference to fishes commonly encountered by anglers. In order to identify a fish, based on its written description, the reader may need to refer to the diagrams on the inside back cover for the proper names used to describe a body part.

Kentucky has a total of 242 species of fish, which represents one of the most diverse assemblages in North America. Many are obscure minnows and darters, which are not commonly seen by anglers. However, these fish often have specific habitat requirements in our streams and lakes, which are subjected to degradation by man's activity. The loss of these fish and habitats often indicates larger problems that may eventually affect the sport fishery. The uniqueness and integrity of this fish assemblage can only be protected by our collective effort as individuals and as a society.

Enjoy your use of Kentucky's renewable fishery resource!

Acknowledgments

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LARGEMOUTH BASS (*Micropterus salmoides*)

Also called: Bigmouth bass, black bass, green bass, bucketmouth bass, lake bass

Distribution: Common in most waters throughout the state including still water areas of streams.

Descriptions: Greenish with a horizontal stripe of black blotches along sides. Upper back is much darker; lower parts are white. Named for its large mouth, a largemouth's jawbone extends beyond the back of the eye; the two dorsal fins (spiny and soft-rayed) are nearly separated or deeply notched. Most largemouth bass caught in Kentucky weigh less than 10 pounds.

Habits: Spawning activity begins when water temperatures approach 62-65 degrees. At this time the fish are usually in shallow water (less than 5 feet) with the male guarding the nest. Largemouth bass may be found near logs, stumps, rocks, vegetation and/or bushes along shoreline, points, bars, submerged islands or creek channels.

Fishing: This most abundant and sought-after member of the black bass family will strike a wide variety of artificial baits including crankbaits, spinnerbaits, jigs, buzzbaits, artificial worms, flies and popping bugs and natural baits such as crayfish, earthworms, minnows, leeches, frogs and salamanders.



SMALLMOUTH BASS (*Micropterus dolomieu*)

Also called: Bronzeback, brownie, green trout, smallie, brown bass, redeye bass

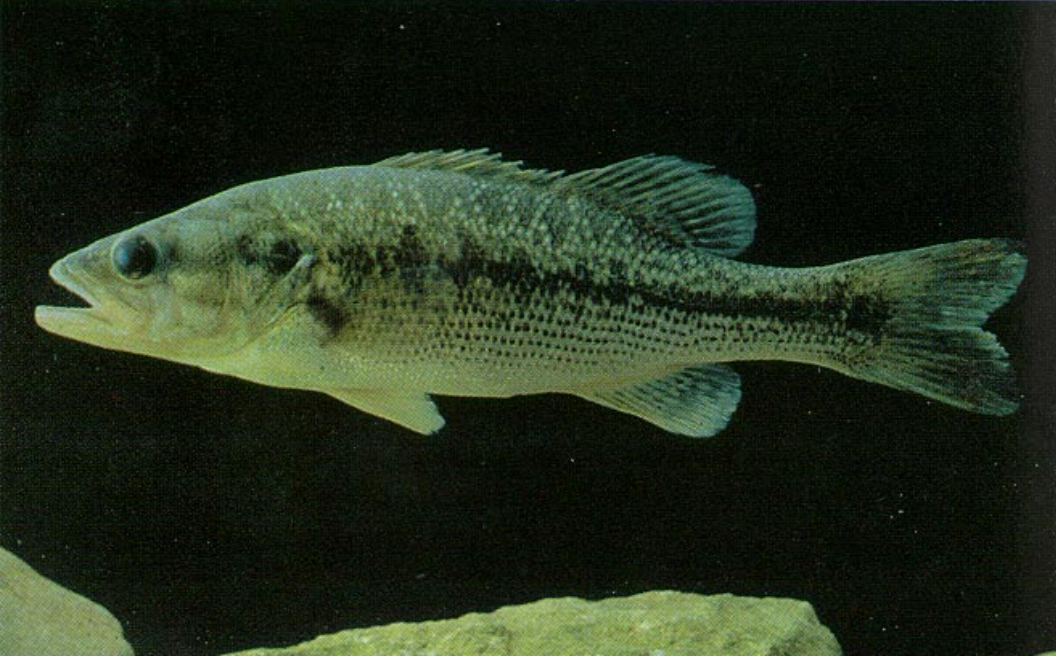
Distribution: More abundant in eastern and central Kentucky streams which have rocky bottoms and flowing water; also common in several large lakes.

Description: Brown or bronze colored on its sides with three to five dark lines radiating back from the eye. Smallmouth bass do not have the dark horizontal stripe on the sides like largemouth and Kentucky bass; however, bronzebacks frequently have 10-15 vertical bars on the sides. It may take as long as six years for a smallmouth to grow to 12 inches in length. Smallmouth bass seldom exceed seven pounds in size.

Habits: Spawning activity begins when water temperatures are between 60 and 65 degrees, generally earlier than other black basses. Stream spawning occurs in pools with gravel bottoms near riffles. Rocky, sandy bottoms are also selected for lake spawning. Smallmouth bass will not tolerate silt bottoms or other polluted conditions.

Fishing: Smallies are highly-prized game fish due to their tremendous fighting abilities. They are readily susceptible to a variety of baits similar to those preferred by the largemouth bass. The food of choice is the crayfish; therefore, live crayfish or "soft craws" or artificial baits which look and move like crayfish are good baits. Also, many stream anglers find casting or drifting live hellgrammites (commonly called go-devils) in riffle-sections of streams is productive.





SPOTTED (Kentucky) BASS (*Micropterus punctulatus*)

Also called: Spotted bass, spot, lineside, redeye

Distribution: Common in most major lakes and stream drainages throughout the state, but prefers clear streams.

Description: Often confused with largemouth bass because both species have a dark horizontal stripe on the sides. Kentucky bass have definite spots below the stripe and a patch of teeth on the base of the tongue. The notch in the dorsal fin is not as deep as the notch that appears on the largemouth bass and a narrow membrane generally connects the two top fins. The jaw bone does not extend beyond the rear margin of the eye but stops near the center. Kentucky bass seldom exceed four or five pounds.

Habits: These fish tend to school more than any other member of the black bass family and are often encountered chasing shad in open water in lakes. They are also more common in areas near the dam (lower lake) in Kentucky lakes. General habits are more similar to smallmouth bass than largemouth bass but the growth rates of Kentucky bass are intermediate between the two.

Fishing: Readily caught by the same methods used for smallmouth bass and largemouth bass. Casting live minnows with a small split-shot sinker along rocky points is a popular method on lakes in the fall.

BLUEGILL (*Lepomis macrochirus*)

Also called: Bream, sunfish, perch, red-breasted sunfish, sunperch, coppermosed bream

Distribution: Statewide, especially in farm ponds.

Description: A deep bodied, slab-sided fish with a small mouth. Pectoral fins are long and pointed (not rounded). The gill flap is completely dark. The sides are dark bluish-green with darker vertical bars. The belly is deep orange to rust color. A dark spot is present on the back part of the dorsal fin. Maximum size is 10-11 inches.

Habits: Spawning activity begins in late May, peaks around mid-June and then tapers off through August. Like most sunfish, bluegill nest in colonies and will crossbreed (hybridize) with other members of the sunfish family. Frequently found in shallow, shady areas along the shoreline.

Fishing: This popular member of the sunfish family may be caught on a variety of live bait including earthworms, crickets, meal worms and wax worms and artificial baits ranging from small jigs and spinners to poppers and wet or dry flies.



GREEN SUNFISH (*Lepomis cyanellus*)

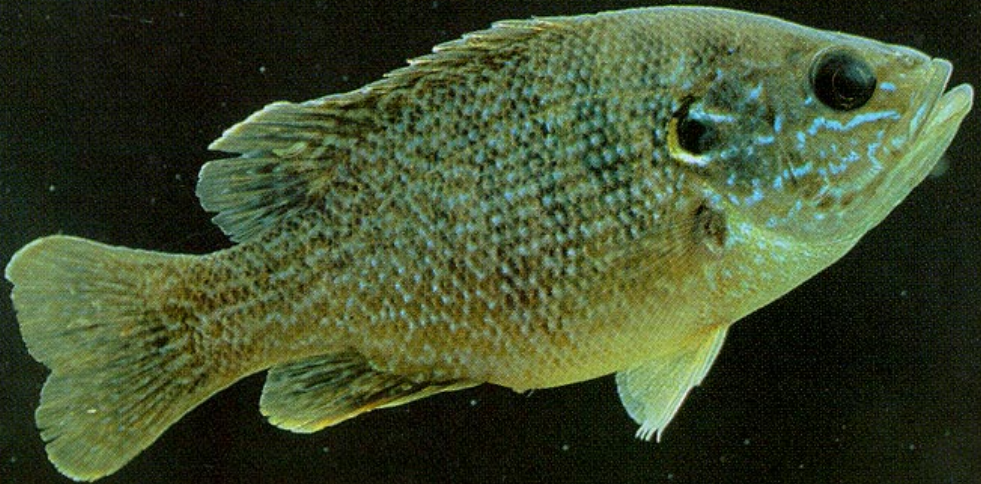
Also called: Black perch, green perch, pond perch

Distribution: Statewide.

Description: Not as deep bodied as other sunfish but often thicker. The mouth is also larger than other sunfish. The sides of the head generally have irregular stripes of blue coloration. Males have a yellow-white band on the margin of the dorsal, tail, and anal fins. Commonly five to six inches in length and seldom grow beyond eight inches.

Habits: Tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions and may be found in almost any aquatic habitat in the state. Its larger mouth size allows it to consume larger food items than other members of the sunfish group. Readily hybridize (cross-breed) with other members of the sunfish family. Green sunfish-bluegill hybrids are commonly sold as “hybrid bluegill”.

Fishing: Although not as highly desirable due to its small size, these fish are easily caught by using any bluegill fishing techniques.



REDEAR SUNFISH (*Lepomis microlophus*)

Also called: Shellcracker, stumpknocker, yellow bream, sunfish, bream

Distribution: Sporadically occurs throughout the state but more common in small lakes or ponds.

Description: A deep, slab-sided sunfish with long pointed pectoral fins very similar in appearance to the bluegill. Adult males have a distinctive red margin on the gill cover flap while females have a light orange flap. These fish should not be confused with pumpkinseed (page 32) which has wavy bluish lines on the head and redear do not. These fish may grow to 11 inches in length and weigh about one pound.

Habits: Redear colonize similar to bluegill to spawn, and begin spawning activity when water temperatures approach 75 degrees. Nests are generally located in deeper water than bluegill. Snails are a common food item, hence the name “shellcracker”.

Fishing: A highly desirable panfish but usually difficult to catch. Since they are bottom feeders, small live bait such as worms or crickets, or small artificial baits fished near the bottom are generally productive.



LONGEAR SUNFISH (*Lepomis megalotis*)

Also called: Bream, sun granny, sunperch, pumpkinseed, creek perch

Distribution: Statewide.

Description: These highly colorful sunfish have short, rounded pectoral fins. The black gill flap is long and flexible with a scarlet or white border. The head has blue stripes while the breast and belly are red, orange or yellow. This fish should not be confused with the pumpkinseed (page 32). These fish seldom grow beyond six inches.

Habits: Colonizing, spawning, and nest-building habits are similar to other sunfish species. Usually live in shallow-water zones of lakes or streams and feed on a wide variety of aquatic insects. They are generally the most common of the stream sunfish.

Fishing: Longears are not often sought after due to their smaller size; however, they are easily caught on worms, crickets and small artificial baits.



WARMOUTH (*Lepomis gulosus*)

Also called: Warmouth bass, warmouth sunfish, goggle-eye, redeye, stumpknocker, logperch

Distribution: Statewide in lakes and streams.

Description: Often confused with rock bass, warmouth are dark olive to grey with brownish sides and yellow markings. Each side of the head has five dark lines radiating from the snout and eye. The anal fin has three spines (the rock bass has five to six spines). Their mouth is larger than most sunfish, similar to the rock bass. Warmouth rarely grow longer than 10 inches.

Habits: Prefer clear water and vegetated areas. Generally found in low numbers compared to other members of the sunfish family.

Fishing: These aggressive fish are easily caught by using conventional bluegill fishing methods. Since their large mouth allows them to take a minnow, warmouth are often caught by crappie fishermen.



ROCK BASS (*Ambloplites rupestris*)

Also called: Goggle-eye, redeye, rock sunfish, black perch

Distribution: Mainly confined to rocky, clear streams in Central and Eastern Kentucky.

Description: A thick-bodied sunfish often confused with warmouth, rock bass are dark olive in color and most scales have a dark spot. The mouth is large and the eye is rimmed in red. The most distinguishing characteristic is the presence of five or six spines in the anal fin. Rock bass seldom grow beyond 10-11 inches.

Habits: Generally associated with smallmouth bass populations in clear, rocky streams, rock bass are usually found in deep, rocky pools near vegetation or woody debris.

Fishing: Rock bass are caught on crayfish, hellgrammites, minnows and a variety of artificial lures including jigs and crankbaits.





WHITE CRAPPIE(top)
(Pomoxis annularis)

BLACK CRAPPIE
(Pomoxis nigromaculatus)

Also called: White crappie—papermouth, newlight
Black crappie—strawberry bass, calico bass

Distribution: Both species are distributed throughout the state in rivers and lakes; however, black crappie are not as common.

Description: Both species are silvery olive. Black crappie have numerous black spots irregularly spaced over its body; white crappie have seven to nine vertical dark bars on the sides. There are six spines in the front dorsal of white crappie, while the black crappie has seven to eight spines. Black crappie are thicker across the back which generally causes them to weigh more than a white crappie of similar length. Crappie seldom grow beyond 15 inches in length and most crappie caught in Kentucky fall in the 8 - 12-inch range.

Habits: Crappie enter shallow water to spawn when the water temperatures warm to 60 degrees in the spring. Following spawning they return to deep water around drop-offs, stump rows, tree tops or other artificial cover. Black crappie tend to use weed beds more than white crappie. White crappie tolerate muddy water conditions better than black crappie.

Fishing: Commonly caught by still fishing live minnows or by casting small jigs around cover, crappie are the most highly-prized panfish in Kentucky. Fishing is best during the spring spawning season, but their schooling behavior also allows for good winter fishing.



WHITE BASS (*Morone chrysops*)

Also called: Stripes, sand bass, striped bass, bar fish, streaker

Distribution: Large streams and rivers; most major lakes.

Description: A silvery fish with several dark horizontal stripes along its sides. The two dorsal fins are separated. Often confused with smaller striped bass, hybrid striped bass, and yellow bass (see descriptions). Three anal spines are graduated in length. There is generally a single patch of teeth on the base of the tongue. White bass seldom grow beyond 15 inches in length.

Habits: White bass “run” upstream to spawn when water temperatures reach 50-55 degrees in the spring. There is no parental care of the young and adults migrate downstream to deeper sections following spawning. They are schooling fish and often chase schools of shad near the surface. They congregate below dams on larger rivers during the early spring.

Fishing: White bass are excellent fighting fish especially on light tackle. They are good to eat if the red meat is removed from the fillet. Minnows are the best natural bait. Artificial lures include spoons, spinners, jigs, flies, and small shad-like crankbaits. Casting topwater lures into “jumps” (fish feeding on bait fish near the surface) is the most exciting fishing; however, trolling over schools may be equally effective. A popular method on lakes is fishing at night “under lights” with minnows, small jigs or spoons.





STRIPED BASS (*Morone saxatilis*)

Also called: Rockfish, rock, striper

Distribution: Originally a salt-water species introduced through stocking. Currently stocked only in the Ohio River and Lake Cumberland. Often migrate up Ohio River tributaries and especially the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers below Kentucky and Barkley lake dams.

Description: Though striped bass resemble white bass and striped bass hybrids, the striped bass body is more streamlined or torpedo shaped. Horizontal lines on the sides formed by black spots are more prominent on striped bass and generally extend unbroken for the entire length of the body. Striped bass also generally have two patches of teeth on the base of the tongue. Adult fish in the 20-pound class are common, but these fish can exceed 50 pounds.

Habits: During cooler months (December-May), striped bass may travel many miles in a day. These open-water predators often chase bait fish to shallow water near the bank or heads of embayments.

Spawning behavior is similar to white bass and upstream movement is common despite limited or no spawning success. Adult striped bass seek depth with cool water temperatures (approximately 68 degrees) in the summer in Lake Cumberland.

Fishing: Striped bass may be taken on crayfish, shad, skipjack herring, night crawlers, large shiners, sunfish or on artificial baits by drifting or slow trolling. Artificial surface baits are excellent in the spring in Lake Cumberland and in river tailwaters during early morning and late evening periods. Casting or trolling white doll flies or crankbaits resembling shad are also effective. When cleaning this fish, removal of the red meat and retaining the white flesh produces an excellent fillet.

YELLOW BASS (*Morone mississippiensis*)

Also called: Barfish, streaker, sand bass, striper, brassy fish, gold bass

Distribution: Yellow bass occur sporadically in the Mississippi and Ohio rivers and lower sections of their tributaries; common in Kentucky, Barkley, and Guist Creek lakes.

Description: Often confused with white bass, but yellow bass have a distinct yellow color on their sides and the two dorsal fins are slightly connected. The first anal spine is short, while the second and third are much longer and nearly equal in length. Yellow bass seldom grow beyond 10 inches.

Habits: These fish may spawn by making a spawning run similar to white bass; however, they often spawn on gravel bars or rocky shorelines within a lake. They are schooling fish that may congregate with white bass.

Fishing: Yellow bass readily accept live bait or artificial lures, and are generally caught while seeking another fish species.



HYBRID STRIPED BASS (*Morone chrysops* x *Morone saxatilis*)

Also called: Wipers, stripers, hybrid rocks, sunshine bass

Distribution: Presently stocked in Herrington, Barren River, Guist Creek, Taylorsville, and Fishtrap lakes. The Ohio River also has been stocked by bordering states. Escapements from these lake stockings have produced fishable populations in several other streams in the state.

Description: Hybrid striped bass result from a cross between the striped bass and white bass. There is no fool-proof method to distinguish between this hybrid and either parent. The body configuration of young hybrids resembles white bass more than striped bass, since hybrids have a higher arch in the back. Hybrid striped bass seldom grow larger than 15 pounds.

Habits: Hybrids have the same schooling tendency as both parent species and often school with them. In lakes, hybrids often make a headwater spawning run up major tributaries similar to the white bass.

Fishing: White bass and striped bass fishing methods apply. Hybrids are famous for their superior fighting abilities. In the late fall, hybrids are often caught in lakes near the dam by fishing crayfish near the bottom on points. Like the striped and white bass, removal of the red meat produces a better flavor to the flesh.



CHANNEL CATFISH (*Ictalurus punctatus*)

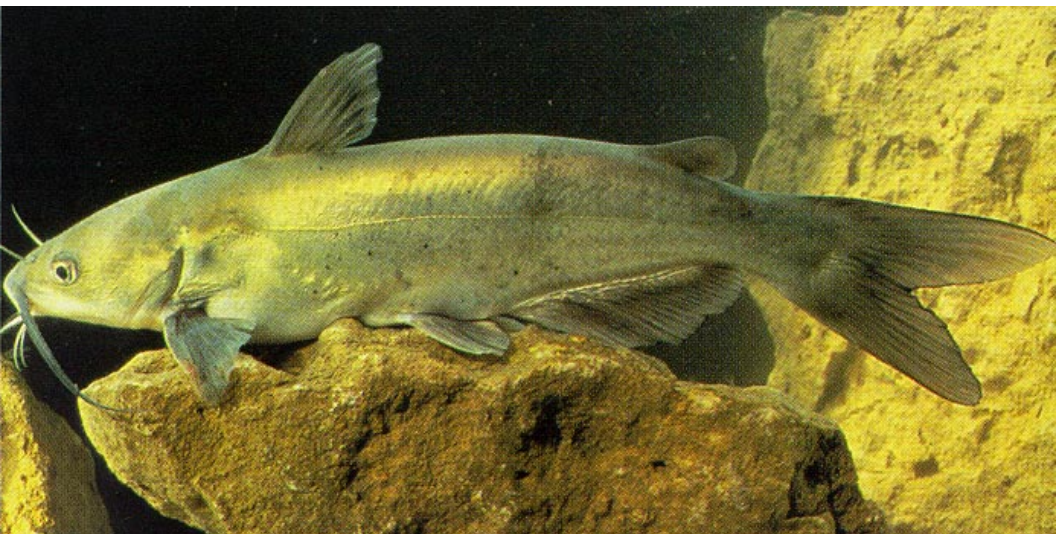
Also called: Fiddler, channel cat, willow catfish, spotted catfish, forked-tail cat

Distribution: Statewide.

Description: Distinctive characteristics are the deeply-forked tail, dark spots on the body (for young fish only) and the anal fin is rounded on the margin. This fish may be distinguished from a blue catfish by the straight margin of the anal fin on the blue catfish. Channel catfish often weigh between two and seven pounds. Channel catfish larger than 15 pounds are rare.

Habits: Channel catfish are opportunistic feeders consuming other fishes, insects, crayfish, worms, and a variety of dead material. These fish normally spawn between May and July when water temperatures approach 75 degrees. Channel catfish spawn in cavities created by hollow logs, underwater ledges or holes in banks. Catfish are most active at night and retire to deep water during the day.

Fishing: Most productive fishing success is night fishing on or near the bottom with nightcrawlers, minnows, cut bait and “stink” bait. Tailwaters below major lakes and navigation dams on the major rivers are prime areas for concentrations of catfish. Limb, trot, or jug lines are also very effective in major lakes.





BLUE CATFISH (*Ictalurus furcatus*)

Also called: Chucklehead cat, white catfish, Mississippi cat, Fulton cat, blue channel, highfin blue

Distribution: Common in Kentucky and Barkley lakes, but rare or absent in other lakes in the state. More common in the lower Ohio, Tennessee, Cumberland, and Mississippi rivers and occasionally found in other major tributaries to these rivers

Description: Blue-gray in color without spots or other markings, blue catfish are characterized by a deeply-forked tail and the anal fin has a straight margin. These fish attain larger sizes than the channel catfish. Blues larger than 25 pounds are not uncommon.

Habits: Blue catfish occupy “big-river” conditions. Breeding and feeding habits are similar to those of channel catfish.

Fishing: Methods for channel catfish apply. The most popular place to catch these fish in Kentucky is below Kentucky and Barkley lake dams (tailwaters) and in Kentucky Lake.

FLATHEAD CATFISH (*Pylodictis olivaris*)

Also called: Mud cat, yellow cat, flat belly, shovelnose cat, willow cat, shovelhead

Distribution: Common in major streams, rivers and lakes.

Description: With its distinctive flat head and square tail, the flathead's body is usually dark in color or mottled with spots. Adults attain an enormous size; fish weighing more than 50 pounds are common.

Habits: A long-lived fish that maintains a secretive lifestyle often inhabiting secluded and obscure places, usually in deep water. Spawning and feeding habits are similar to other catfishes. The large mouth enables it to feed upon a wide array of food items from insects and fish to small terrestrial animals (which get into the water); most often live or fresh dead.

Fishing: Use heavy line and rod to land these fish. Tailwaters are excellent areas to encounter these fish; however, bottom fishing, limb, jug, or trotlines with live bait (opposed to dead bait) are effective in both rivers and lakes. "Tickling and noodling" (hand grabbing) is a popular method in smaller streams.





BULLHEADS

Yellow bullhead (*Ameiurus natalis*)
Black bullhead (*Ameiurus melas*)

Also called: Mud cat, yellow belly

Distribution: Black bullheads and yellow bullheads are generally found throughout the state while brown bullheads (not shown) are uncommon and usually found in low numbers.

Description: All bullheads have a straight (non-forked) tail fin. Black bullheads and brown bullheads have black or grey chin barbels while yellow bullheads have white chin barbels. Black bullheads are difficult to distinguish from brown bullheads; however, black bullheads lack the mottled body coloration of brown bullheads. Bullheads seldom grow longer than 12 inches.

Habits: Collectively, bullheads utilize a wide variety of habitats but they are more common in pools, backwaters or areas where slower current passes over mud bottoms. Once introduced into a farm pond they usually quickly overpopulate.

Fishing: Though not as large as other members of the catfish family, bullheads provide excellent sport fishing and table fare. Fishing methods listed for other catfish apply.

WALLEYE (*Stizostedion vitreum*)

Also called: Walleyed pike, jack salmon, jack, jack fish, pikeperch, blue pike, glass-eye

Distribution: Present in several major river systems including the Ohio, Kentucky, Cumberland and Lower Licking rivers. Best populations (the result of annual stockings) are in Cumberland, Nolin River, Laurel River, Painstville, Carr Fork and Martins Fork lakes.

Description: Often confused with sauger, the walleye has a white tip on the lower lobe of its tail fin and a dark, prominent spot at the base of its first dorsal fin. Walleye in the two to five pound range are not uncommon. Walleye seldom grow larger than 15 pounds. Both walleye and sauger have sharp teeth and gill covers which should be avoided when handling these fish.

Habits: Walleye are one of the first species of fish to become active in the spring when water temperatures approach the spawning range of 46-50 degrees. These fish will congregate below dams in the rivers or near riffles in major tributaries of lakes. Walleye usually locate near the bottom on rocky or gravel bottoms throughout the year. In summer, walleye seek cool water areas (76 degrees) which contain adequate oxygen levels.

Fishing: Trolling or casting bright-colored baits such as spoons, deep-diving crankbaits, jigs, jigs tipped with plastic grubs or minnows or weight-forward spinners tipped with nightcrawlers are effective walleye fishing strategies. The flesh of this fish is considered excellent tablefare.





SAUGER (*Stizostedion canadense*)

Also called: Sand pike, jack salmon, jack fish, spotfin pike, river pike

Distribution: Common throughout the Ohio River and its major tributaries. Also common in Kentucky Lake and less common in Lake Cumberland and Barkley Lake.

Description: This fish is similar to walleye except the sauger does not have a white tip on its tail fin or a black spot on its dorsal fin. The sauger's first dorsal fin has a series of black spots in the membranes of the fin. The body has dark bands or saddles across the back. Sauger larger than five pounds are rare.

Habits: Sauger and walleye have similar spawning and feeding habits but sauger have the ability to tolerate "muddier" water conditions. Sauger and walleye can naturally interbreed producing a fish commonly called a saugeye. Saugeye can have characteristics of both parents. Sauger are primarily a river fish which locate near the bottom on a variety of bottom types.

Fishing: Methods are similar to those described for walleye. Tailwaters below dams on the Ohio River and below Kentucky Lake are ideal locations to fish for sauger especially late November through April. Eddies near turbulent water are active staging and feeding areas. Gravel bars and points are good locations in Kentucky Lake.

RAINBOW TROUT (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

Also called: Rainbow, redbreast, steelhead

Distribution: Introduced into Kentucky and presently sustained by stocking in selected streams and lakes throughout the state. (See trout fishing guide).

Description: Characterized by a colorful, pink or red, band extending down its sides. Numerous black spots are present on the back as well as the dorsal and tail fins. The tail fin is slightly forked. Normally, these fish are between 8 and 10 inches in length when stocked but, in large streams or rivers, they are capable of obtaining a weight of more than 10 pounds.

Habits: This species is confined to clear, cold-water streams in which the water temperature seldom exceeds 70 degrees. Tailwaters below deep reservoirs that meet this requirement and a number of lakes which contain deep cold water zones with sufficient oxygen are also stocked.

Fishing: These fish may be caught by a variety of methods ranging from still fishing whole kernel corn, cheese, marshmallows and worms to casting small crankbaits, spinners, or spoons. Rainbows are also caught with fly rods and artificial flies. Late summer lake fishing is best in areas near the dam and at depths within the 60 to 70 degree temperature range.



*Rainbow trout (top)
Brown trout (bottom)*

BROWN TROUT (*Salmo trutta*)

Also called: Brown, German brown

Distribution: This species, introduced into the United States during the late 1800's, is stocked only in a few selected cold-water streams in Kentucky (see trout fishing guide).

Description: The sides of this trout normally have red spots surrounded by blue halos scattered from head to tail. The end of the tail fin is almost square compared to the slightly forked tail of a rainbow trout. Brown trout can grow to about three to five pounds in three years. These fish are capable of obtaining weights of more than 20 pounds in large streams or rivers.

Habits: Brown trout habitat requirements are similar to rainbow trout except brown trout have the tendency to locate more around woody debris. They feed on both aquatic and terrestrial insects with fish becoming more important components of the diet as they get older.

Fishing: Methods are similar to those for rainbow trout. Their capability of attaining larger sizes in streams increases opportunities to catch a trophy-size fish. Brown trout are generally more difficult to catch than either rainbow or brook trout.





BROOK TROUT (*Salvelinus fontinalis*)

Also called: Brookie, speckled trout, mountain trout, speck

Distribution: This introduced species is stocked only in a few isolated streams.

Description: The backs and sides of this fish are dark olive or slate colored with light worm-like markings across the back. Light spots appear on the sides along with scattered red spots with blue halos. The dorsal and tail fins are heavily speckled; other fins are often orange with black and white edges. Brook trout seldom exceed 15 inches in length.

Habits: These fish only inhabit clear, cold head water streams (less than 68 degrees) in very protected watersheds. Optimal habitat primarily exists in pools of these types of streams at elevations of 1500-1800 ft. mean sea level and above.

Fishing: These fish readily rise to small lures, baits, and flies provided the stream pool is approached quietly with minimal disturbance.

MUSKELLUNGE (*Esox masquinongy*)

Also called: Musky, muskie, Wisconsin musky, purebred musky, *Esox*, briar-tooth

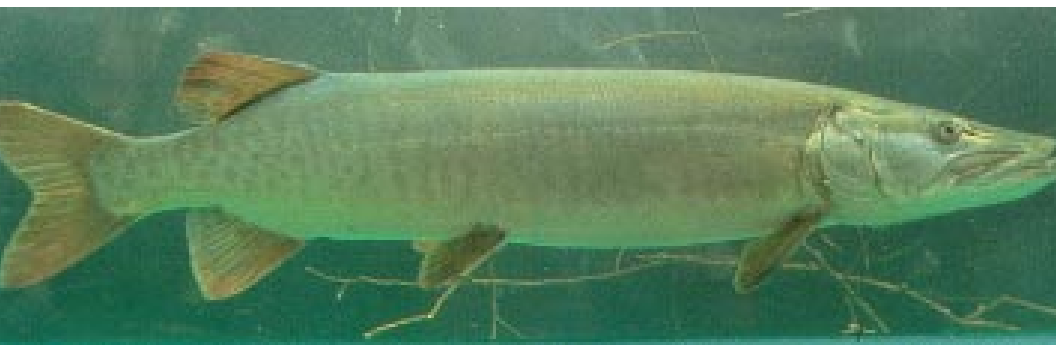
Distribution: Muskellunge naturally occurred in many eastern, central and southwestern Kentucky streams but now receive supplemental stockings due to poor reproductive success. Streams in the upper Kentucky, Green, and Licking rivers and the Little Sandy River in addition to Tygarts and Kinniconick creeks are stocked. Muskellunge are annually stocked in Green River, Cave Run and Buckhorn lakes.

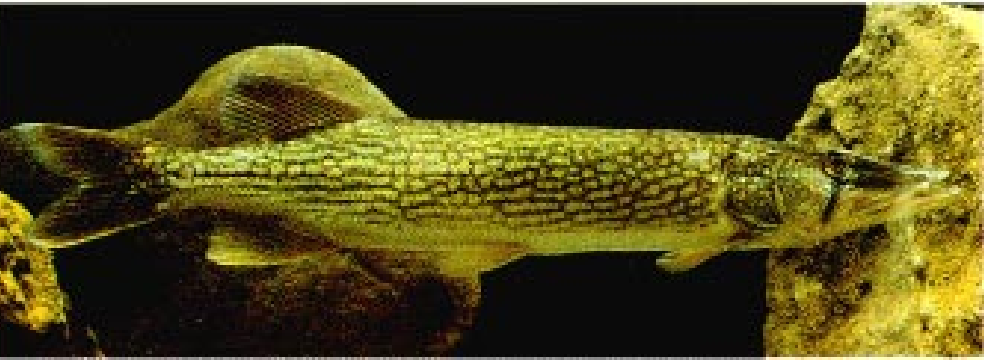
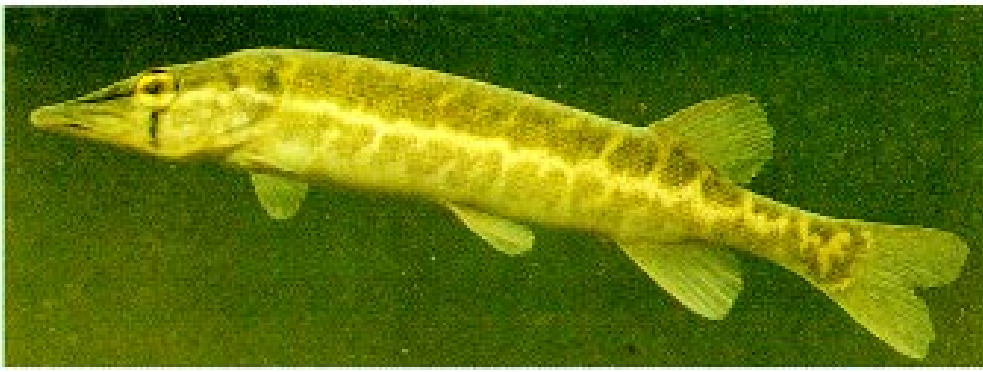
Description: Muskellunge have an elongated body with a duck-billed mouth containing large teeth. They are generally dark green or grayish with vertical bars on the upper half of the body which may not always be distinguishable. Small muskellunge may be confused with the chain or grass pickerel. Grass pickerels are distinguished by the prominent dark teardrop below the eye and fully scaled gill covers; muskellunge gill covers are only scaled on the upper half or three-quarters. Muskellunge may attain lengths up to 50 inches and weigh over 40 pounds.

Tiger muskie are produced by crossing the muskellunge with northern pike. Tiger muskie are no longer stocked in Kentucky.

Habits: In streams the muskellunge generally inhabits larger pools and often stays around woody debris. In spring and fall, muskellunge in lakes use shoreline habitat associated with structure. In the summer muskellunge retreat to drop offs, submerged creeks, the main river channel and other irregular lake features.

Fishing: A variety of crankbaits, buzzbaits, bucktail spinners and jerk baits attract muskellunge when fished slowly. Live suckers are also an effective bait. Trolling with large baits and bouncing these baits off the bottom or around cover is effective during the mid-summer.





GRASS PICKEREL (top)
(*Esox americanus vermiculatus*)

CHAIN PICKEREL
(*Esox niger*)

Also called: Grass pike, little pickerel, mud pickerel

Distribution: Grass pickerel are found in streams throughout western and north-eastern Kentucky. The chain pickerel is found only in extreme western Kentucky, Kentucky Lake and streams and oxbow lakes of the Mississippi River drainage.

Description: Both of these fish have an elongated body shape similar to muskellunge. The gill covers of the grass pickerel are completely covered with scales and a prominent black teardrop extends below the eye. The grass pickerel seldom exceeds 15 inches in length. The chain pickerel has distinct chain-like or interwoven markings on its sides. Chain pickerel may attain lengths of 25 inches.

Habits: Both fish dwell in weed beds along margins of streams, lake shorelines, or headwaters of lake embayments.

Fishing: Both fish are often caught accidentally (while fishing for another species) by casting small artificial baits along the shoreline. The small size of the grass pickerel prevents it from being considered sport or food fish quality.

FRESHWATER DRUM (*Aplodinotus grunniens*)

Also called: Sheepshead, white perch, rakhead, drummer, rosie, croaker, gaspergou, grunting perch

Distribution: Throughout the state in major lakes and rivers and their larger tributaries.

Description: This deep-bodied fish is normally silver colored with a red or rosey cast on the belly. The divided dorsal fin extends almost the entire length of the back. This is the only fish in the state with a prominent lateral line extending the entire body length through the tail fin.

This fish has the ability to produce a noise by rapid contractions of the abdominal muscles against the air bladder.

Most fish are in the 10 to 20-inch length range and weigh between one and four pounds. Freshwater drum are capable of attaining weights of more than 35 pounds.

Habits: Drum are often found in areas with silt bottoms. Adult fish feed heavily on clams and snails which the fish crushes with strong molar-like teeth in its throat.

Fishing: Worms, crayfish, minnows or mussel meat fished on the bottom are effective for this fish. Occasionally they may be caught on small artificial lures, especially jigs.





CARP (top)
(*Cyprinus carpio*)

GRASS CARP
(*Ctenopharyngodon idella*)

Also called: Common carp, German carp, European carp, Israeli carp, mirror carp, leather carp, buglemouth

Distribution: Carp are a member of the minnow family, introduced into North America from Asia via Europe in the late 1800's. They are found throughout the state. Grass carp (White Amur) were also imported from Asia and are now present in some small lakes and ponds.

Description: Carp are slate to gold in color with a dark spot at base of each scale. They have one stiff spine in both the dorsal and anal fins. Carp may be confused with a similar exotic species, the goldfish. Goldfish lack barbels on the upper jaw which are distinguishing characteristics of carp.

Two other varieties of carp also occur in Kentucky: mirror and leather. The leather carp is without scales and leathery in appearance while the mirror carp has only two or three rows of large scales along the back.

Carp should not be confused with the introduced grass carp which has a different mouth shape and no chin barbels (see photo) and feeds almost exclusively on vegetation.

Habits: Carp live and thrive in a variety of habitat types and are noted for their tolerance to pollution. They prefer warm standing or slow moving water. Carp consume a wide variety of plant and animal matter but can't control aquatic vegetation like grass carp. During spawning activities in April and May, carp are often observed splashing in shallow water.

Fishing: Carp are strong fighters when hooked and may be caught with small hooks on doughballs, worms, corn and marshmallows. Bowfishing and giggering are popular when carp are spawning in shallow water. Carp make good table fare when properly prepared.



SOME OTHER KENTUCKY FISH



Smallmouth buffalo
(Ictiobus bubalus)



Golden redbreast
(Moxostoma erythrurum)



Spotted sucker
(Minytrema melanops)



White sucker
(*Catostomus commersoni*)



Northern hog sucker
(*Hypentelium nigricans*)



Creek chub
(*Semotilus atromaculatus*)



Rainbow darter
(Etheostoma caeruleum)



Skipjack herring
(Alosa chrysochloris)



Flier
(Centrarchus macropterus)



Orangespotted sunfish
(Lepomis humilis)



Redbreast sunfish
(Lepomis auritus)



Pumpkinseed
(Lepomis gibbosus)



Central stoneroller
(*Campostoma anomalum*)



Logperch
(*Percina caprodes*)



Bluntnose minnow
(*Pimphales notatus*)



Striped shiner
(Luxilus chrysocephalus)



Golden shiner
(Notemigonus crysoleucas)



Brook silverside
(Labidesthes sicculus)



Gizzard shad
(Dorosoma cepedianum)



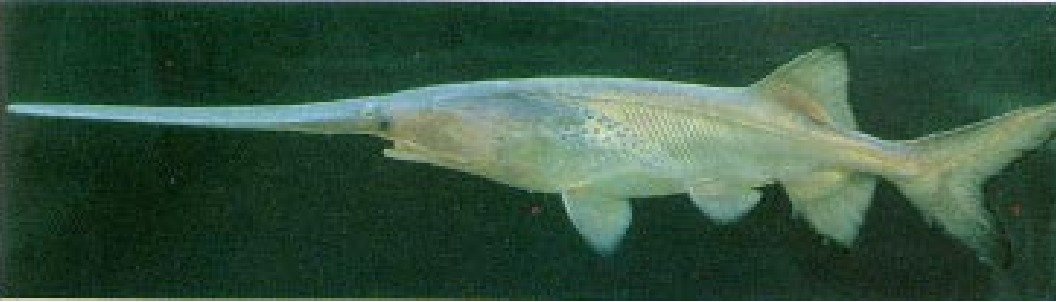
Threadfin shad
(Dorosoma petenense)



Chestnut lamprey
(*Ichthyomyzon castaneus*)



American eel
(*Anguilla rostrata*)



Paddlefish
(*Polyodon spathula*)



Mooneye
(*Hiodon tergisus*)



Bowfin
(*Amia calva*)



Shovelnose sturgeon
(*Scaphirhynchus platyrhynchus*)

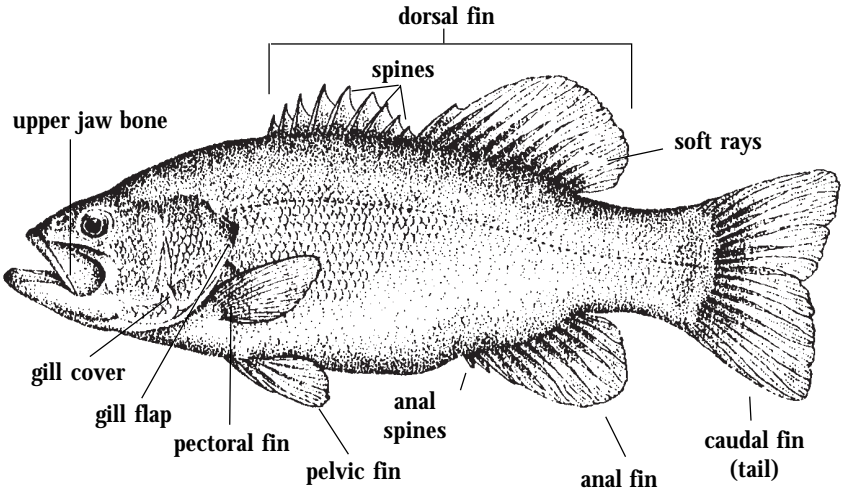


Longnose gar
(*Lepisosteus osseus*)

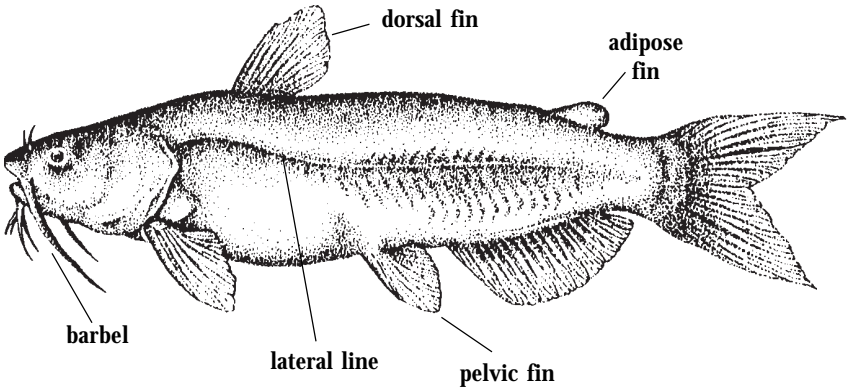


Spotted gar
(*Lepisosteus oculatus*)

Spiny-rayed Fish



Soft-rayed Fish



Rafiki '13



Kentucky Department of
Fish and Wildlife Resources

Kentucky's Major Lakes

1. Kentucky Lake
2. Barkley Lake
3. Rough River Lake
4. Nolin River Lake
5. Barren River Lake
6. Green River Lake
7. Dale Hollow Lake
8. Lake Cumberland
9. Laurel River Lake
10. Herrington Lake
11. Taylorsville Lake
12. Cave Run Lake
13. Buckhorn Lake
14. Grayson Lake
15. Yatesville Lake
16. Paintsville Lake
17. Dewey Lake
18. Fishtrap Lake
19. Carr Fork Lake

Related Links:

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Army Corps of Engineers

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