



# SPORT FISH OF OHIO **identification**

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE




With more than 40,000 miles of streams, 2.4 million acres of Lake Erie and inland water, and 450 miles of the Ohio River, Ohio supports a diverse and abundant fish fauna represented by more than 160 species. Ohio's fishes come in a wide range of sizes, shapes and colors...and live in a variety of aquatic habitats from our largest lakes and rivers to the smallest ponds and creeks. Approximately one-third of these species can be found in this guide. This fish identification guide provides color illustrations to help anglers identify their catch, and useful tips to help catch more fish. We hope it will also increase your awareness of the diversity of fishes in Ohio.

This book also gives information about the life history of 27 of Ohio's commonly caught species, as well as information on selected threatened and endangered species. Color illustrations and names are also offered for 20 additional species, many of which are rarely caught by anglers, but are quite common throughout Ohio. Fishing is a favorite pastime of many Ohioans and one of the most enduring family traditions. A first fish or day shared on the water are memories that last a lifetime. It is our sincere hope that the information in this guide will contribute significantly to your fishing experiences and understanding of Ohio's fishes. Good Fishing!

The ODNR Division of Wildlife manages the fisheries of more than 160,000 acres of inland water, 7,000 miles of streams, and 2.25 million acres of Lake Erie. Management activities include improvement of spawning habitat and installation of fish attractors or structure. Management also includes population and harvest studies using electrofishing, netting, and angler surveys. Fishing regulations are another important tool for managing Ohio's fisheries. Fish biologists recommend regulations when they are needed to maintain a quality fishery. Often overlooked, but vitally important activities which involve fish management include the construction of boat ramps and fishing piers, and public information and education efforts.

Ohio maintains six fish hatcheries which produce in excess of 30 million fish each year for stocking programs. Walleye, saugeye, muskellunge, trout, and hybrid striped bass are some of the fish produced. Ohio's hatchery and stocking efforts make a variety of fishing experiences available to Ohio's anglers. Stocking is often used to bolster fish populations when natural reproduction is low or nonexistent. It is also used to establish fisheries for nonreproducing hybrid fish and to stock newly created or rehabilitated water areas. Research is conducted to develop new fish management practices and strategies. The Division's research efforts are aided by universities and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Look for this distinctive symbol where you buy fishing tackle or motorboat fuel, and where you fish or launch your boat. This symbol indicates that the manufacturer pays a special excise tax under the federal Sport Fish Restoration Act—and that your Division of Wildlife is working to improve your fishing.



6. Largemouth Bass
7. Smallmouth Bass
8. Spotted Bass
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10. Redear Sunfish
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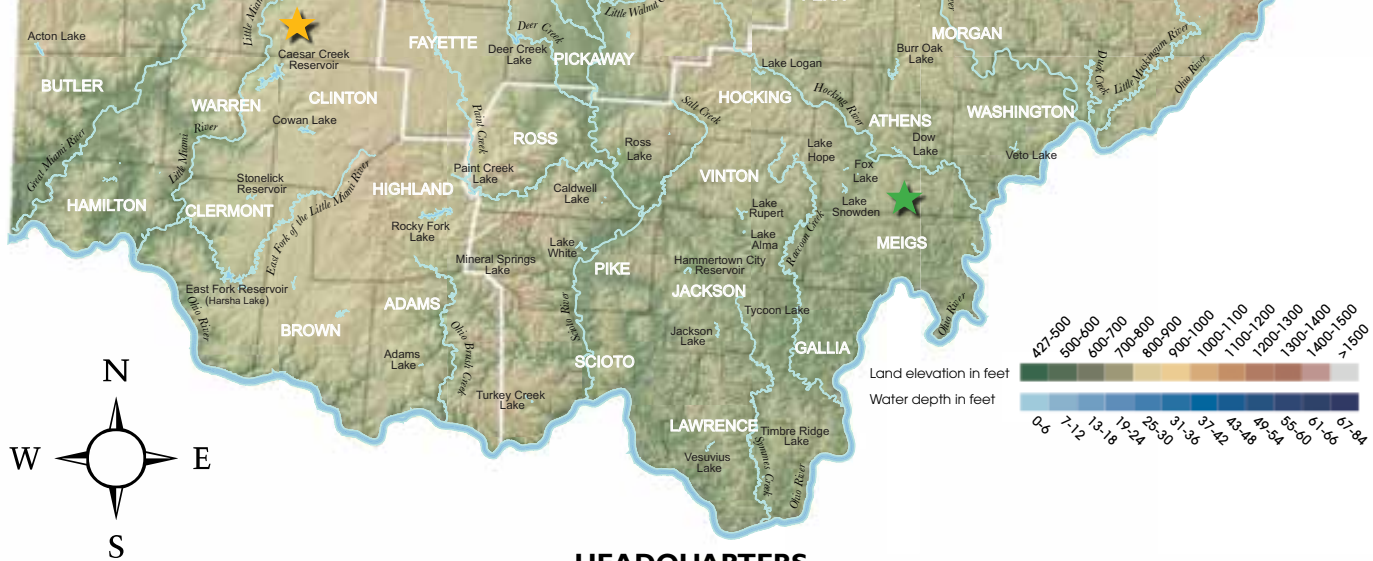
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Map Courtesy of ODNR Geological Survey

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black bass • bigmouth bass

## largemouth bass

*Micropterus salmoides*



6

**IDENTIFICATION:** The back part of the jaw extends beyond the back border of the eye when the mouth is closed. A dark lateral band extends from head to tail. Smallmouth bass are similar in appearance, but the upper jaw does not extend beyond the back border of the eye when the mouth is closed. Spotted bass have a dark spot on the gill cover and spots or dark streaks on the lower side of the body. All spotted bass will have a patch of teeth on their tongue, whereas very few largemouth bass have these tooth patches.

**FISHING TIPS:** Largemouth bass can be caught on a wide variety of natural and artificial baits using casting, spinning, and fly fishing gear. The best time to fish for bass is May, June, and July.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 12-15 inches and weigh 1-3 pounds, but can reach over 25 inches and 13 pounds.

**FOOD:** Adults eat crayfish, frogs, large insects, and fishes.

**SPAWNING:** From mid-April to mid-June, they construct nests near shore in water from 1-15 feet deep. They prefer silt-free sandy or gravelly bottoms, but they will use any type of bottom.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Largemouth bass are found in ponds, lakes, and slow sluggish streams in every county in Ohio.





brown bass • brownie • smallie

## smallmouth bass

*Micropterus dolomieu*



7

**IDENTIFICATION:** When mouth is closed, the lower part of the jaw does not extend beyond the rear of the eye. Color varies from yellow-green to olive-green with bronze iridescence. Adults have prominent dark vertical bars along their sides.

**FISHING TIPS:** Flyfishing, baitcasting, and spincasting with a variety of lures are all popular ways of taking smallmouth bass. Live baits such as hellgrammites, soft craws, and minnows are also popular. May and June are the most productive months for smallmouth fishing in Ohio; however, late summer can be productive for Lake Erie smallmouth.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 12-15 inches and weigh 1-2 pounds

**FOOD:** Aquatic insects, crayfish, and small fish

**SPAWNING:** Occurs in May to early June when water temperature is 55-65°F. Nests are built in gravel or hard bottom substrates in 2 to 20 feet of water. The female lays between 2,000 to 15,000 eggs. The male guards the nest and the fry for a short time. Young smallmouth feed on zooplankton and insect larvae.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Thrive in streams with gravel or rock bottoms with a visible current. Abundant in the reef areas and rocky shorelines of Lake Erie. Often abundant in upground reservoirs in northwest Ohio and in quarries.





kentucky bass • spots

## spotted bass

*Micropterus punctulatus*



8

**IDENTIFICATION:** Spotted bass have dark spots on the gill cover and spots or streaks on the lower sides of the body. The upper jaw does not extend beyond the back of the eye when the jaw is closed. Looks very similar to largemouth bass except that spotted bass have a patch of teeth on their tongue, whereas very few largemouth bass have tooth patches.

**FISHING TIPS:** Spotted bass can be caught on a wide variety of natural and artificial baits using casting, spinning, and fly fishing gear. The best time of year to catch spotted bass is May, June, and July, but they can be caught throughout the year.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 12 inches and weigh less than a pound, but can reach over 5 pounds in Ohio.

**FOOD:** Adults eat insects, crayfish, frogs, and fishes.

**SPAWNING:** During mid-April to mid-June. Nests are constructed on a rock or gravel substrate near cover. The males construct nests allowing the females to lay between 1,100 and 47,000 eggs. Males guard the eggs and fry.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Spotted bass occur in low gradient streams in southern Ohio.



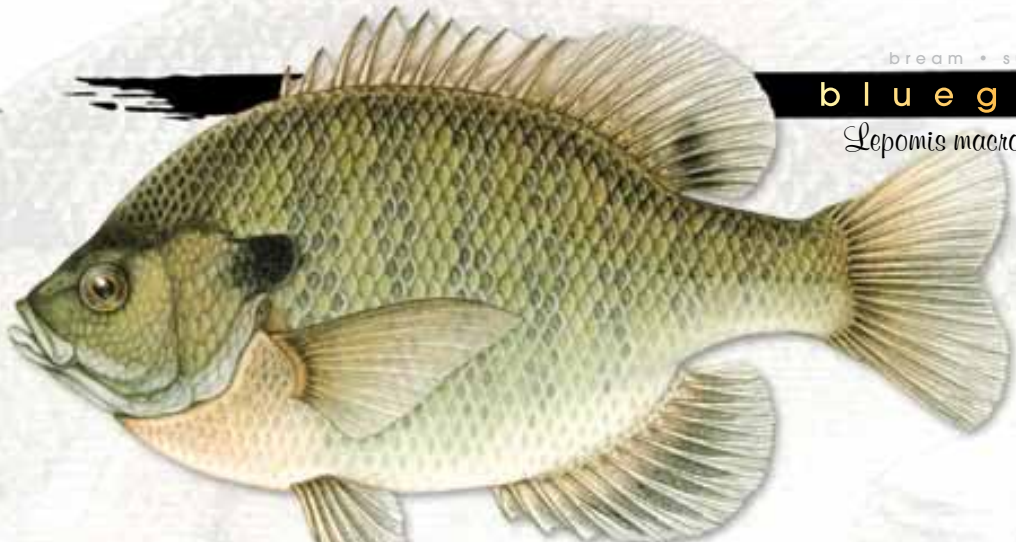




bream • sunfish

# bluegill

*Lepomis macrochirus*



9

**IDENTIFICATION:** A deep slab-sided fish with a small mouth and a long pectoral fin. Colors vary, however the ear flap is always black and bluegills often have a black blotch near the end of the soft dorsal fin.

**FISHING TIPS:** Live or natural bait such as red worms, insects, or wax worms on a small (#8 or #10) hook are productive. Fly fishing is also popular.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 6-10 inches, depending on habitat and population

**FOOD:** Insects, insect larvae, small fish, and fish eggs..

**SPAWNING:** Peak spawning in Ohio occurs in mid-May to mid-June, when water temperatures are 65-70°F. Nests are usually built in water 1-4 feet deep on sand or gravel bottoms, or on other bottom substrates, even in heavily vegetated areas. Bluegill typically build nests in large groups, or beds. Males select an area and sweep out a saucer shaped nest with their tails. The females then lay between 10,000 to 60,000 eggs in the nest which are guarded by the male. The eggs usually hatch in about five days.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Common throughout Ohio, but they prefer clear ponds and lakes with rooted vegetation.

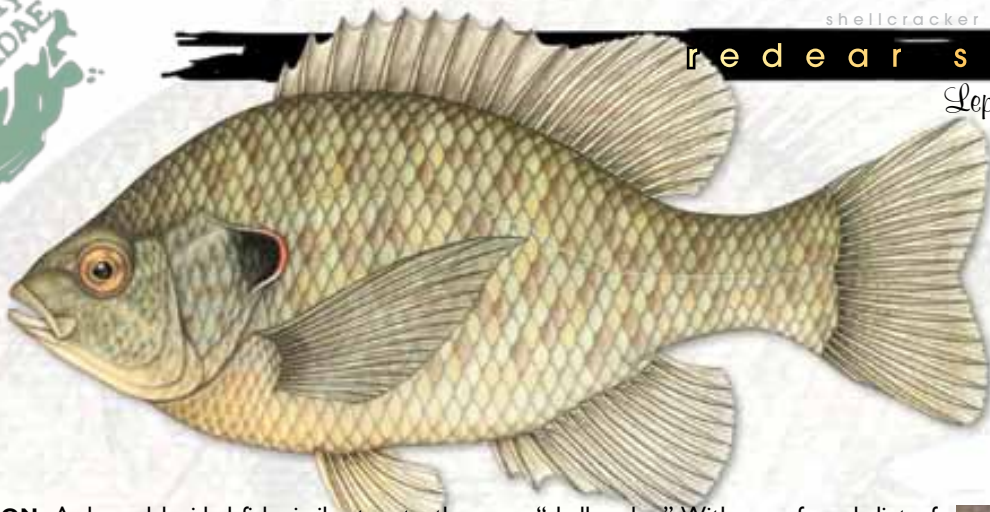




shellcracker • stumpknocker

## re de ar sun fish

*Lepomis microlophus*



10

**IDENTIFICATION:** A deep slab-sided fish similar to the bluegill, except the ear flap is black with a red or orange margin; black blotch at the base of the dorsal fin is absent.

**FISHING TIPS:** Most often caught with live baits such as red worms or wax worms fished on a small hook in the spring. Males are especially easy to catch during the spring when they aggressively guard spawning nests along the shoreline. Small spinners and flies can also be successful. After spawning they move to deeper water near stumps or weedbeds.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 9-11 inches

**FOOD:** Snails and other mollusks, crayfish, insects and insect larvae, small fish. Their habit of eating snails led

to the name "shellcracker." With a preferred diet of snails, redear sunfish use specially modified teeth in the throat that allow them to crush a mollusk shell and extract the snail.

**SPAWNING:** Usually during mid-May through June when water temperatures are 65-75°F. Preferred spawning locations are 1-4 feet of water with sand or gravel bottoms, or on any other bottom substrates and in deeper water.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Not native to Ohio; stocked in small lakes and ponds throughout Ohio. Found primarily in clear, warm, waters with vegetation. Their attraction to submerged stumps has led to the name "stumpknocker." Not as common as bluegills.

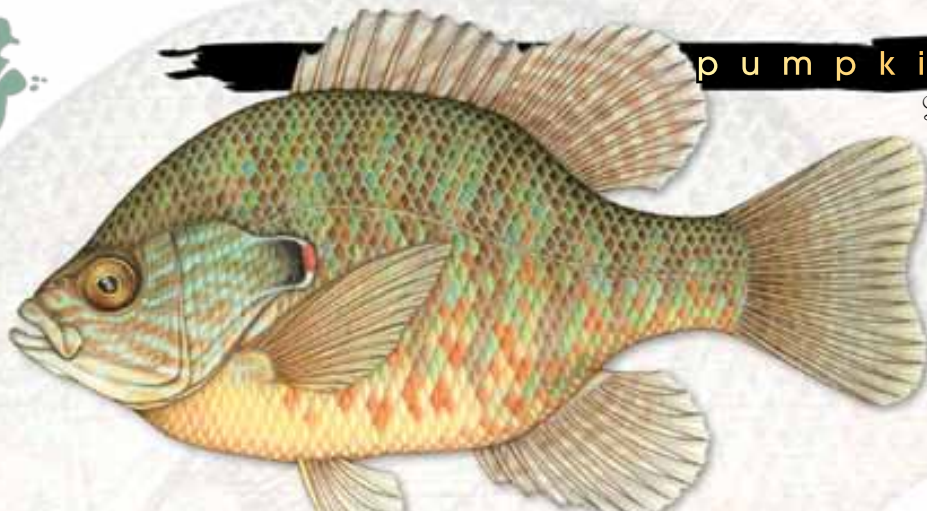




punkys

# pumpkinseed

*Lepomis gibbosus*



11

**IDENTIFICATION:** A very colorful, deep-bodied, slab-sided fish with a small mouth. Breast and belly are orange to yellow, with lighter colored sides in a variety of bright colors. The ear flap is black bordered with an orange-red spot.

**FISHING TIPS:** As with other sunfish, a small hook baited with worms or wax worms will catch pumpkinseeds. Small artificial lures and flies also work well.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 5-8 inches

**FOOD:** Insects and insect larvae, some snails and fish

**SPAWNING:** Similar to other sunfish - eggs laid in a shallow nest near shore. Peak spawning is in May and June, at water temperatures of 65-75°F. Males guard the nest until the eggs hatch. The female will lay between 1,600 to 2,900 eggs.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Widespread throughout the Lake Erie drainage, only scattered populations in the Ohio River. Prefer still waters with dense submerged vegetation.



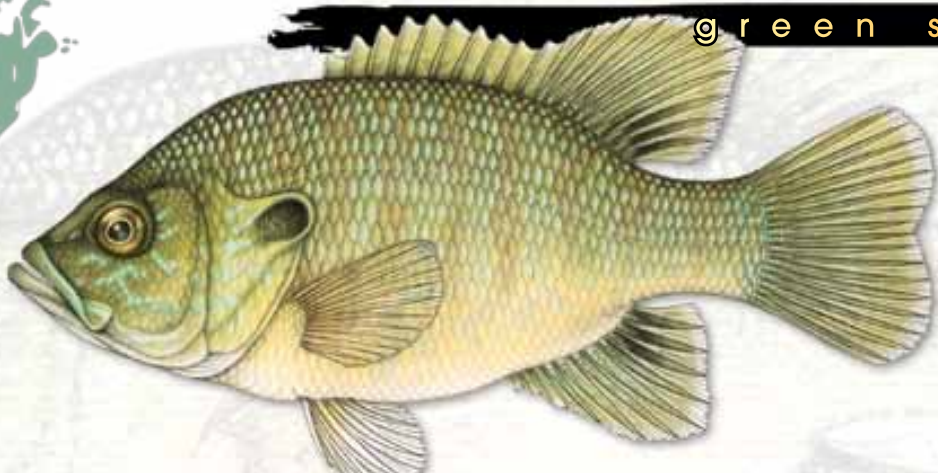




sunfish

green sunfish

*Lepomis cyanellus*



12

**IDENTIFICATION:** Moderately compressed body, but not as deep-bodied as other sunfishes. Mouth is relatively large, with the upper jaw reaching back to the middle of the eye; back color is bluish-green with emerald and yellow iridescence and the belly is yellow to white in color. Has short ear flaps with light colored margins. Anal fin has 3 hard spines.

**FISHING TIPS:** Most green sunfish are caught accidentally while fishing for other sunfish species; they are aggressive and bite readily on red worms, wax worms or minnows.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 3-7 inches

**FOOD:** Insects, mollusks, and small fishes. Their relatively large mouth allows them to eat hard-bodied insects and mollusks.

**SPAWNING:** Similar to other sunfish; eggs laid in a shallow nest near shore. Spawning occurs after the water temperature exceeds 68°F. The female then lays between 2,000 to 26,000 eggs. Males defend the nest for the three to five days it takes the eggs to hatch.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Most lakes and streams throughout Ohio; tolerant of turbid water unlike other sunfishes. Usually associated with structure such as brush, vegetation, rock piles, etc.

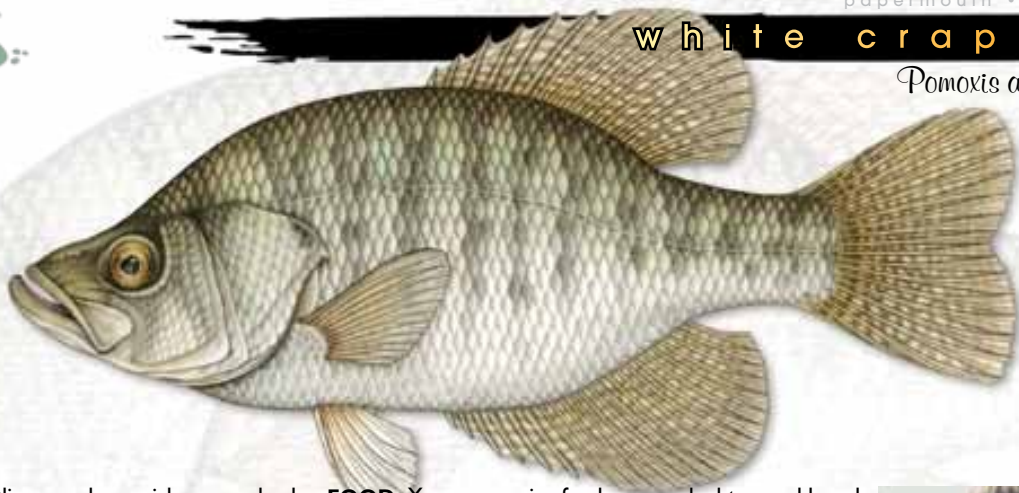




papermouth • specks

# white crappie

*Pomoxis annularis*



13

**IDENTIFICATION:** Olive or brownish-green back with silvery white sides. Back and sides have 5-10 dusky or black vertical bands. Spiny dorsal fin, anal fin, and tail contain a combination of dark spots and bands. Dorsal fin typically contains 5-6 spines.

**FISHING TIPS:** April through June fish close to shore in areas with brush, stumps, docks, etc. for spawning crappies. During summer and early fall, fish deeper areas along old creek channels, roadbeds, and submerged points and humps. Crappies move back inshore later in the fall. Best baits are live minnows, small jigs, doll flies, and spinners.

**ADULT SIZE:** Usually 6-12 inches, but can reach lengths of up to 18 inches and weigh over 3 pounds.

**FOOD:** Young crappies feed on zooplankton and larval insects during their first year of life; as adults they switch to a diet of small fish.

**SPAWNING:** Normally during May and June. Nests in and around brush, rocks, or vegetation in water 1-5 feet deep.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Found throughout Ohio, especially in larger ponds, lakes, rivers, and inshore waters of western Lake Erie. Tolerant of a wide variety of habitats and conditions including areas of silt and turbidity. Usually found near structure such as fallen trees, stumps, docks, rocks, and aquatic vegetation.



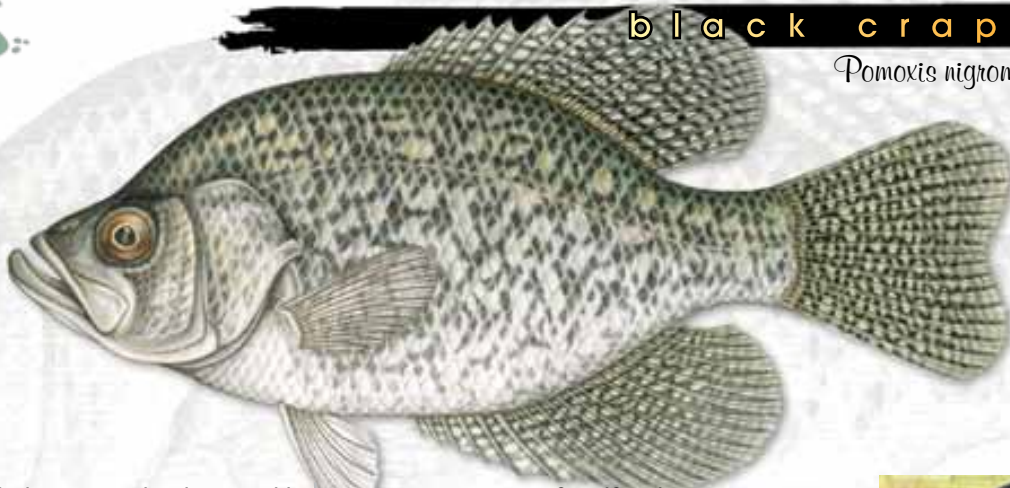




papermouth • specks

# black crappie

*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*



14

**IDENTIFICATION:** Black crappie closely resemble white crappie, but have deeper bodies. Furthermore, their head, back and sides are mottled with dusky or black blotches. These blotches do not form vertical bands as on white crappie. The most reliable characteristic, however, is that black crappie have seven or eight dorsal spines.

**FISHING TIPS:** Black crappie bite best on live minnows, small jigs, and spinners. The spring spawning season is the best time to fish for black crappie. Anglers should concentrate on areas with brush, stumps, and docks. During summer and early fall crappie are usually found in deeper water along creek channels, roadbeds and submerged points. Late fall can be another hot time for crappie as they move inshore again for a short time.

**ADULT SIZE:** average 8 to 12 inches

**FOOD:** After hatching, crappie feed on zooplankton and insect larvae. As they grow, crappie switch primarily to a diet of small fish.

**SPAWNING:** Black crappie spawn during May and June in Ohio. They nest on the bottom in and around brush, rocks, or vegetation in water between 1 and 5 feet deep. Males construct a nest by fanning out small depressions. Females then lay 5,000 to 30,000 eggs in the nest.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Found throughout the state preferring clear water containing aquatic vegetation. They are less tolerant of silt and turbidity than white crappie.

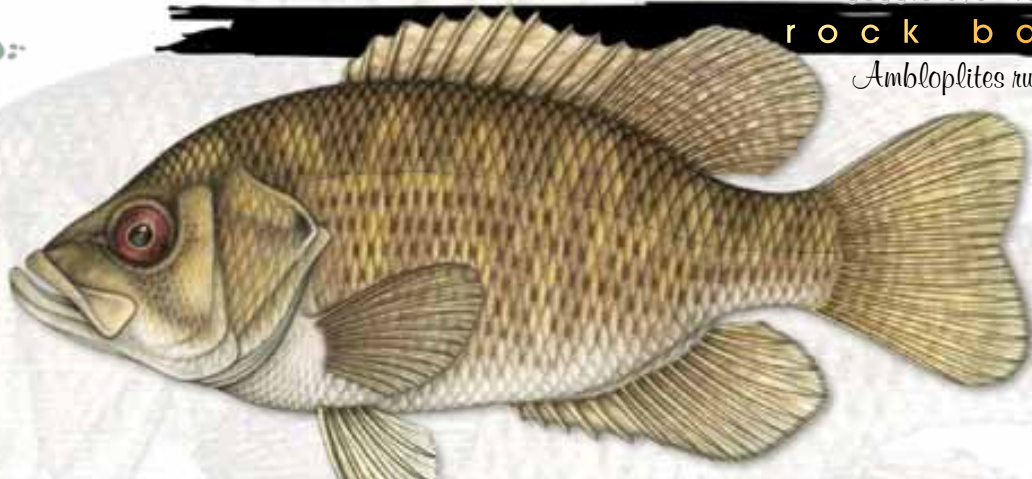




goggle-eye • red-eye

rock bass

*Ambloplites rupestris*



15

**IDENTIFICATION:** Body is thick and heavy with a dark slate or olive green color with bronze and coppery iridescence. Mouth is large with the upper jaw extending past the middle of the eye. Eyes are sometimes various shades of red. Usually has 6 anal fin spines.

**FISHING TIPS:** Small natural and artificial baits fished near large boulders, stumps, vegetation, or docks. Small spinner lures, hellgrammites, small crayfish, leeches, worms, and minnows are ideal baits.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 7-10 inches

**FOOD:** Aquatic insects, crayfish, small fish

**SPAWNING:** Usually in May and June when water temperatures are 60 - 70°F. Spawning is similar to other sunfish species. Females deposit up to 10,000 eggs in a nest, often with more than one female using the same nest. Males remain over the nest to fan the eggs and maintain water flow over the eggs until they hatch in three to four days.

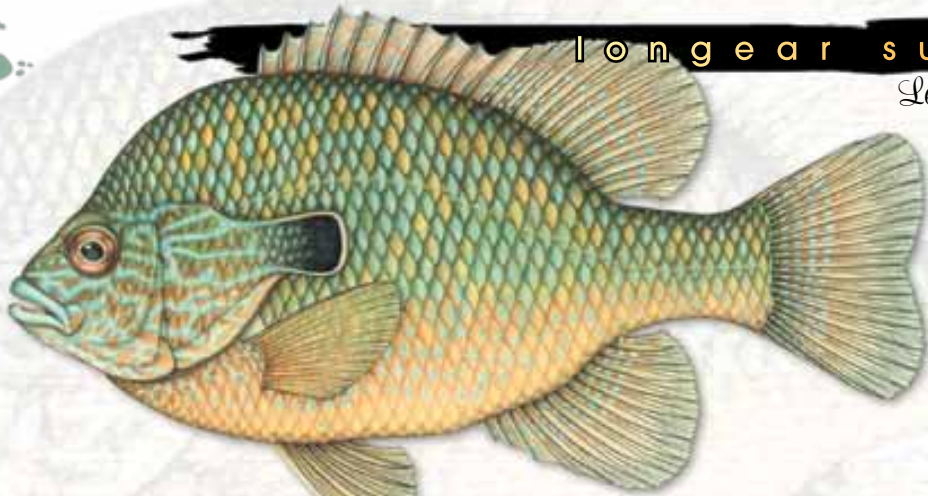
**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Widespread throughout Ohio; prefers clearer streams with coarse gravel and boulders. Common in Lake Erie near reefs, large boulders, and around docks.





## longear sunfish

*Lepomis megalotis*



16

**IDENTIFICATION:** Back is olive-green with blue-green specks on sides; belly is orange or yellow. Ear flaps are longer than those of other sunfish, and are black, occasionally with a white border.

**FISHING TIPS:** Due to their small size, few anglers pursue longear sunfish and most that are caught are accidental. Small hooks baited with red worms or wax worms are effective.

**ADULT SIZE:** Longear grow slowly and can take up to three years to reach 4 inches in length. Seldom exceeds 6 inches

**FOOD:** Insects and insect larvae

**SPAWNING:** Similar to other sunfish; eggs laid in a shallow nest near shore. Spawning begins when water temperature reaches 68-78°F. Males select a spawning site where the females lay up to 22,000 eggs in a single nest. Males remain with the nest to guard the eggs until hatching.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Clear streams and lakes throughout Ohio; common in the Scioto River drainage. Prefer sluggish clear streams of moderate size with beds of aquatic vegetation.







pickereel • yellow pike • walleyed pike

walleye

*Sander vitreus*



17

**IDENTIFICATION:** Has a long slender body with a yellow-olive and bluish-brassy overcast on the sides; the belly is milky white. It has a large clouded eye and a dark blotch on the webbing between the last three spines of the first dorsal fin. Also has numerous sharp teeth. Similar in appearance to a sauger or saugeye.

**FISHING TIPS:** Jigging lures tipped with shiners while ice fishing, bottom bouncing lures or casting weight forward spinner tipped with a nightcrawler, and flatline and controlled depth trolling are all very popular methods for catching walleye. Pre-dawn, dusk and cloudy days are the best times to fish.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 14-22 inches and weigh 2-4 pounds. May reach 36 inches and weigh over 16 pounds.

**FOOD:** Walleye feed mostly on emerald shiners, gizzard shad, alewives, and rainbow smelt

**SPAWNING:** Lake Erie walleyes spawn throughout April when water temperature is 40-50°F. Eggs are scattered over gravel or reef areas of Lake Erie or in the riffle areas of tributary streams. Females can lay as many as 400,000 eggs. The eggs hatch in about 10 days.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Naturally occurs in Lake Erie, the Ohio River, and is stocked into several inland reservoirs in Ohio. Prefers clear to slightly turbid waters with reefs, gravel shoals, bedrock, and other firm bottoms.

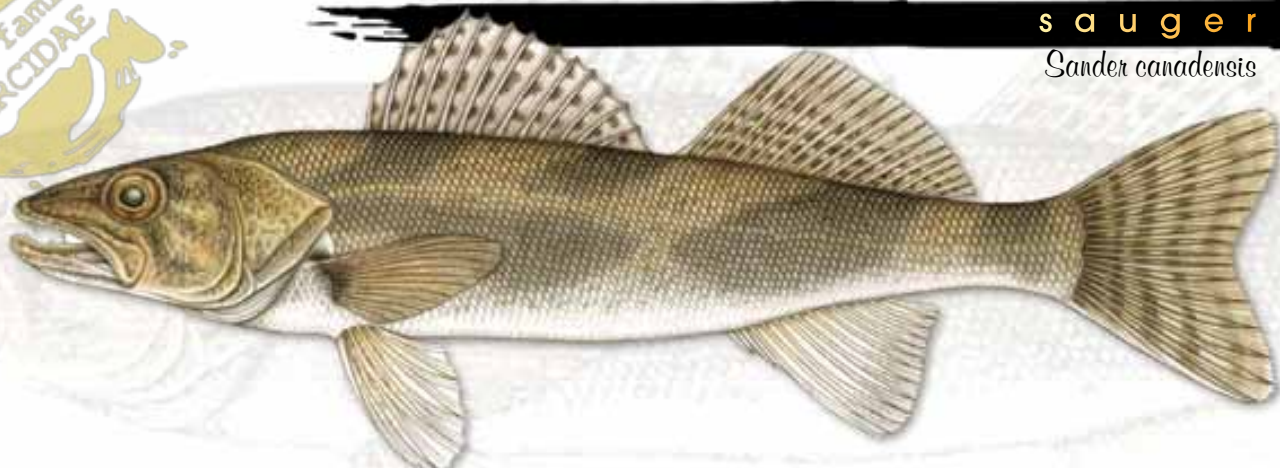




jacks

s a u g e r

*Sander canadensis*



18

**IDENTIFICATION:** Sharp teeth and large cloudy eyes. Body is cylindrical with dark blotches along the sides. Spiny dorsal fin has large rows of dark spots between spines.

**FISHING TIPS:** Jigs, minnows, or crankbaits fished near the bottom are often productive. Tailwaters below dams on the Ohio River and major tributaries are the best areas. Late fall and early spring are the most productive times.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 9-15 inches, and weigh less than one pound; may reach 7 pounds in Ohio.

**FOOD:** Sauger prefer to forage for aquatic insects, crayfish, and small fishes during periods of low light (dawn and dusk).

**SPAWNING:** Eggs are scattered over gravel or other rocky substrates in the spring. Females lay between 10,000 to 50,000 eggs. The eggs are adhesive and stick to vegetation, sticks, and stones until they hatch in 10 days or more.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Ohio River, Lake Erie, and their tributaries. Prefers large, turbid slow-moving rivers and large, cool shallow lakes.

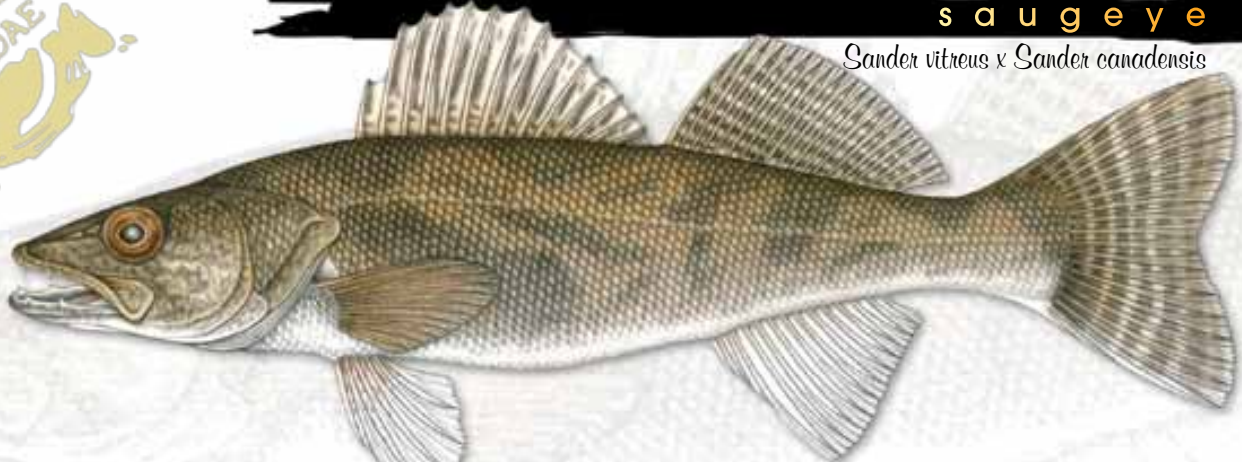






s a u g e y e

*Sander vitreus* x *Sander canadensis*



19

**IDENTIFICATION:** Saugeye are similar to walleye and sauger. Dark bars between the spines on the spiny dorsal fin are the best identifying characteristic for this fish. Sharp teeth, dark blotches on the sides, and a white tip on the lower tail also help identify the saugeye.

**FISHING TIPS:** Many saugeyes are caught in tailwater areas downstream from the lakes and impoundments where they have been stocked. Crankbaits, and jigs with hair, feathers, or plastic tails are good artificial lures. Live minnows and nightcrawlers are also productive. Winter is a good time to fish for saugeyes.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 13-16 inches and average one pound; may grow to 13 pounds in Ohio.

**FOOD:** Primarily small fish

**SPAWNING:** Saugeyes rarely occur naturally; those found in Ohio waters are stocked by the Ohio Division of Wildlife. Saugeye are created by crossing walleye eggs with sperm from a sauger. The result is a fast growing fish that has excellent survival abilities. This makes it ideal for stocking into Ohio reservoirs.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Stocked into many impoundments in Ohio. Also found in streams and rivers below stocked lakes. Saugeye are highly adaptable to most lake and river environments and tolerate turbid waters well.

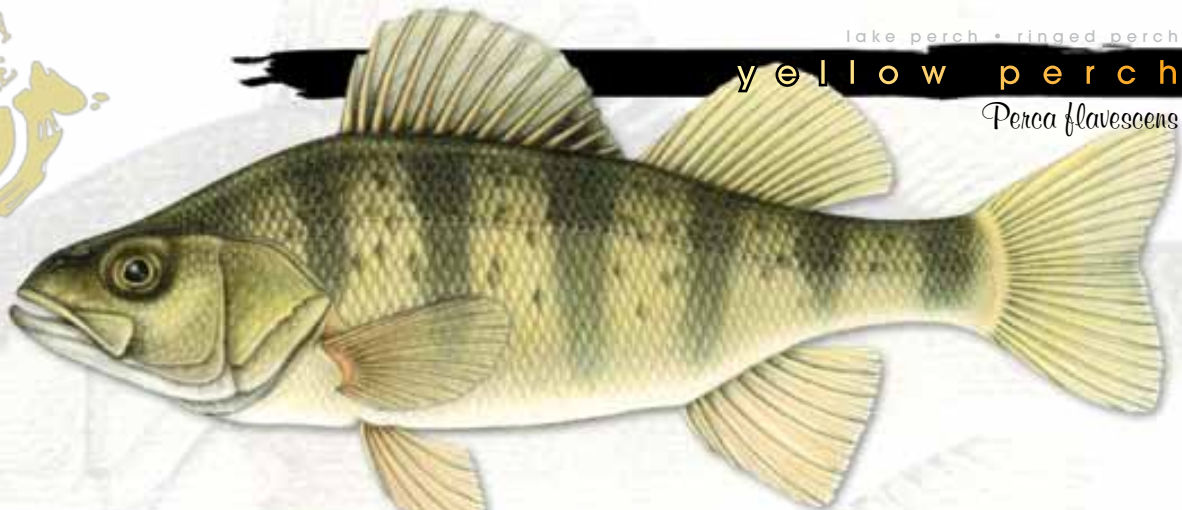




lake perch • ringed perch

## yellow perch

*Perca flavescens*



20

**IDENTIFICATION:** Sides are golden yellow to brassy green with 6 to 8 broad, dark vertical bands and a white to yellow belly. Many small teeth, but no large canines.

**FISHING TIPS:** Best angling occurs in spring near shore and in the fall through winter at various depths using spreaders with minnows, shiners, worms, or cut bait fished near the bottom. Ice fishing often produces some of the best catch rates for yellow perch.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 5-12 inches and weigh 1/4 - 1 pound; can exceed 2 pounds

**FOOD:** Adult aquatic insects and larvae, and small fishes

**SPAWNING:** Occurs from mid-April to early May. Eggs are deposited in adhesive bands over vegetation or on the bottom with no care given by the parents.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Native to Ohio, yellow perch are found in Lake Erie and impoundments, ponds and slow moving rivers throughout Ohio. Yellow perch prefer clear water with moderate vegetation and sand or gravel on the bottom.

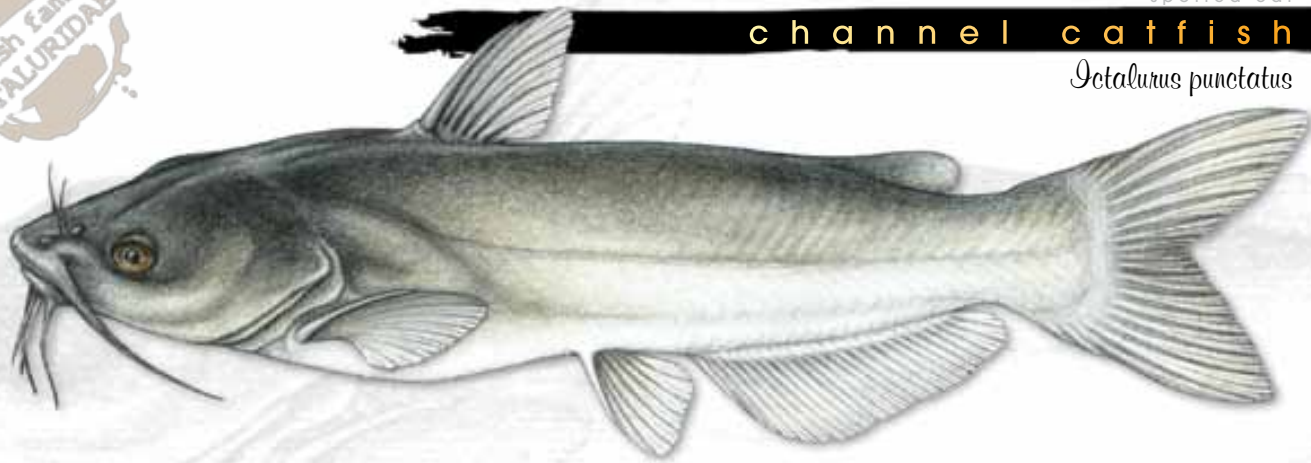




spotted cat

# channel catfish

*Ictalurus punctatus*



21

**IDENTIFICATION:** Channel catfish are scaleless and have slender bodies, deeply forked tails, barbels around the mouth, and curved anal fins with 24-30 rays. Color varies, but is generally bluish-silver on the upper half of the body and silver to white on the lower half. Most young fish have spots on the body. They have sharp spines in the dorsal and pectoral fins. Some anglers mistakenly call channel catfish with few or no spots blue catfish, but blue catfish are found only in the Ohio River.

**FISHING TIPS:** Channel catfish feed on or near the bottom. Nightcrawlers, shrimp, crayfish, chicken livers, and minnows are effective. Spinning or casting tackle with a sinker heavy enough to keep the bait on the bottom is commonly used. A good time to catch channel catfish is after a hard rain when the water is on the rise.

**ADULT SIZE:** Most range from 12-14 inches. Can reach 10 pounds or more, especially in large river systems and productive lakes.

**FOOD:** Insect larvae, crayfish, mollusks, and small fish

**SPAWNING:** Begins when water temperatures reach the mid-70s. Nests are secluded in natural cavities, banks, and burrows.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Channel catfish are common in most large streams and lakes throughout Ohio. They are found in greatest numbers in areas with deep water, clean gravel and boulder substrates, and low to moderate current.





yellow bullhead • black bullhead • brown bullhead

# bullhead catfish

*Ameiurus spp*



22

**IDENTIFICATION:** Bullheads are often difficult to identify. All 3 species (black, brown, yellow) are scaleless and have similar body color, varying from yellow-olive-brown to brownish-black; all have yellow to white bodies.

**FISHING TIPS:** Bullheads bite readily and can be caught using simple, inexpensive equipment. A variety of baits work well such as nightcrawlers, chicken livers, or red worms fished near the bottom.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 10-12 inches and weigh less than 1 pound. Brown bullheads generally are the largest of the bullhead species.

**FOOD:** Insect larvae, small crayfish, snails, and dead fish. Bullheads feed primarily by taste and smell and are most active at night.

**SPAWNING:** From mid-April to mid-June, they construct nests near shore in water from 1-15 feet deep. They prefer silt-free sandy or gravelly bottoms, but they will use any type of bottom.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Bullheads are relatively common throughout the state. Black bullheads are able to tolerate more turbid water than brown or yellow bullheads. Brown bullheads are commonly found in water areas with little or no vegetation and having relatively clean, clear water. They are most numerous in the northern third of Ohio. Yellow bullheads are most numerous in areas with heavy vegetation. The largest populations are in west central Ohio.



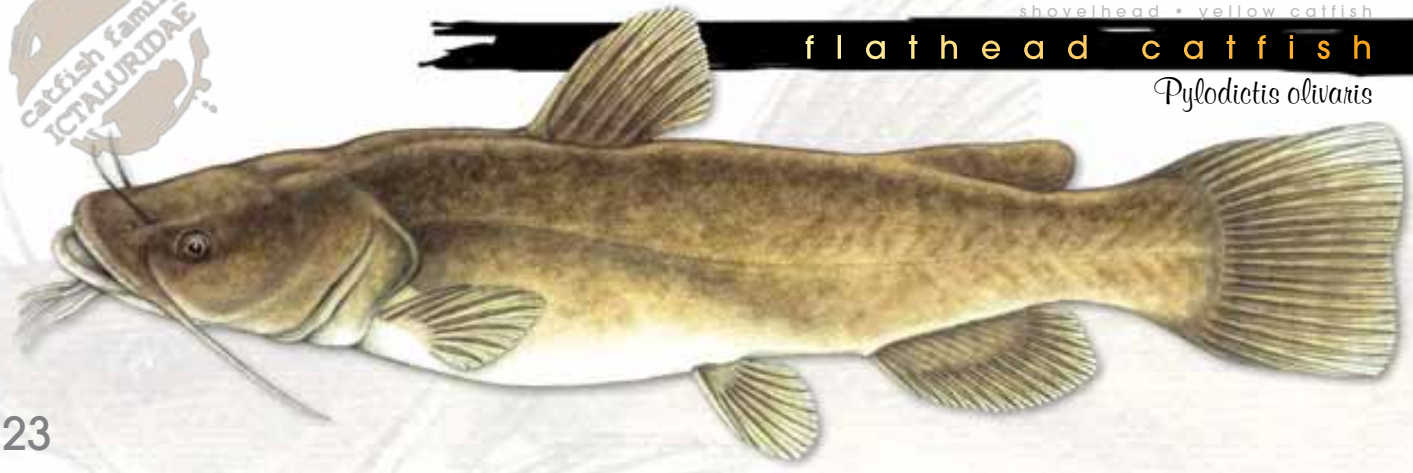




shovelhead • yellow catfish

# flathead catfish

*Pylodictis olivaris*



23

**IDENTIFICATION:** Flathead catfish are the only catfish in Ohio whose head is flattened between the eyes and whose lower jaw is longer than the upper jaw. They are the only large catfish with a square tail. Body color is usually yellow-olive or a dark brown with dark brown blotches. The belly is yellow or yellowish white.

**FISHING TIPS:** Heavy tackle is required when fishing for large flatheads. Live bait, such as a large sucker or chub, is a necessity for successful flathead angling. Cast baits in or around large submerged objects or drift piles. Flatheads are often caught on trotlines.

**ADULT SIZE:** Most flatheads in Ohio are 15-30 inches and 5-40 pounds. Flathead catfish have been known to exceed 5 feet in length and 80 pounds.

**FOOD:** Unlike channel catfish, flathead catfish rarely feed upon dead or decaying matter. Primary food items include live fish and crayfish

**SPAWNING:** Occurs when water temperatures reach 70°F. Flathead catfish build their nests in dark secluded shelters such as natural cavities, undercut banks, or near a large submerged object.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Common in large river systems, a few inland lakes, and some reservoirs in the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District. Adults prefer deep pools with slow current and nearby cover, such as submerged logs and drift piles.







silver bass

# white bass

*Morone chrysops*



24

**IDENTIFICATION:** Have an overall silvery color with steel-blue iridescence and a milk-white belly. The 2 dorsal fins are well separated and the spiny dorsal fin has 9 spines. There are 6 or more dark lateral lines on the sides and back. Closely resembles the white perch.

**FISHING TIPS:** Still fish or drift fish minnows or cast small spinners or plugs. Best fishing in Lake Erie is in late April through May. White bass are often located by watching for circling gulls and terns that are feeding on the minnows driven to the surface by schooling white bass.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 10-14 inches

**FOOD:** Small fish, aquatic insects

**SPAWNING:** Usually occurs in late April into May when the fish move into the tributary streams or reef areas of Lake Erie and near shore in larger lakes. Females broadcast their eggs into the water where they are fertilized by the males and then settle to the bottom and adhere to hard surfaces. The eggs will hatch in approximately two weeks.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Widespread throughout Ohio, in larger lakes, Lake Erie, and the Ohio River. They prefer open clear water with a firm bottom and water depths of less than 30 feet.

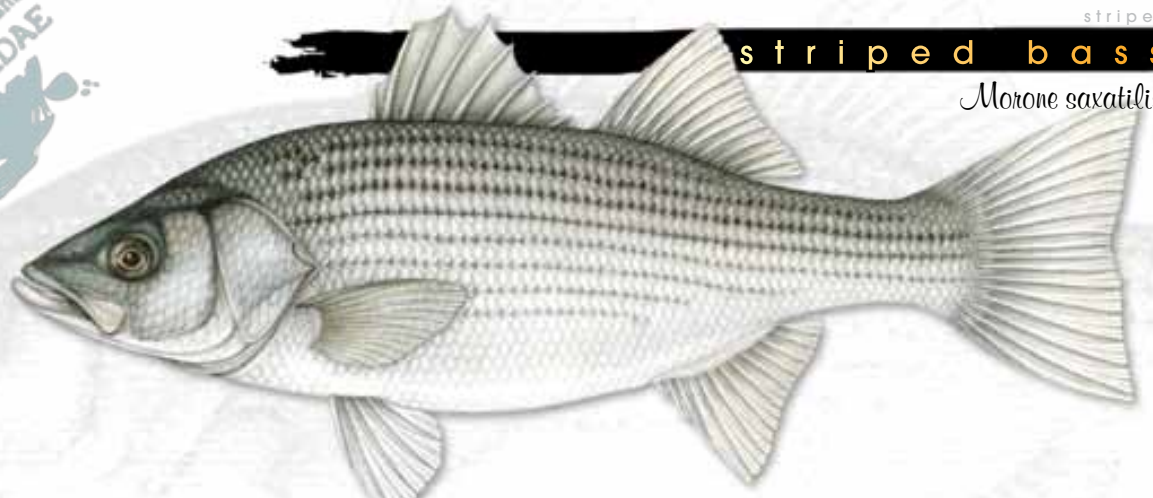




striper

# striped bass

*Morone saxatilis*



25

**IDENTIFICATION:** Long, silvery fish with 7-9 distinct lines running lengthwise along sides and back. Sharp spine on gill cover. Teeth on the base of the tongue are arranged in 2 parallel patches.

**FISHING TIPS:** Live gizzard shad are the most productive live bait. Jigs, jigging spoons, and crankbaits are good lures for casting. Trolling with large, deep-diving crankbaits can also be effective.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 12-24 inches and weigh 1-5 pounds in Ohio. Grows much larger in saltwater habitats. Striped bass grow fast and can live up to 20 years in the wild. Those found in Ohio waters are stocked by the Division of Wildlife.

**FOOD:** Primarily small fish

**SPAWNING:** Striped bass do not reproduce in Ohio.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Native to the Atlantic Ocean, and its coastal tributaries. Striped bass prefer large bodies of deep, cool water. Presently, only stocked in Senecaville Lake and Kiser Lake in Ohio to maintain broodstock for hybrid striped bass production. Occur occasionally in the Ohio River.

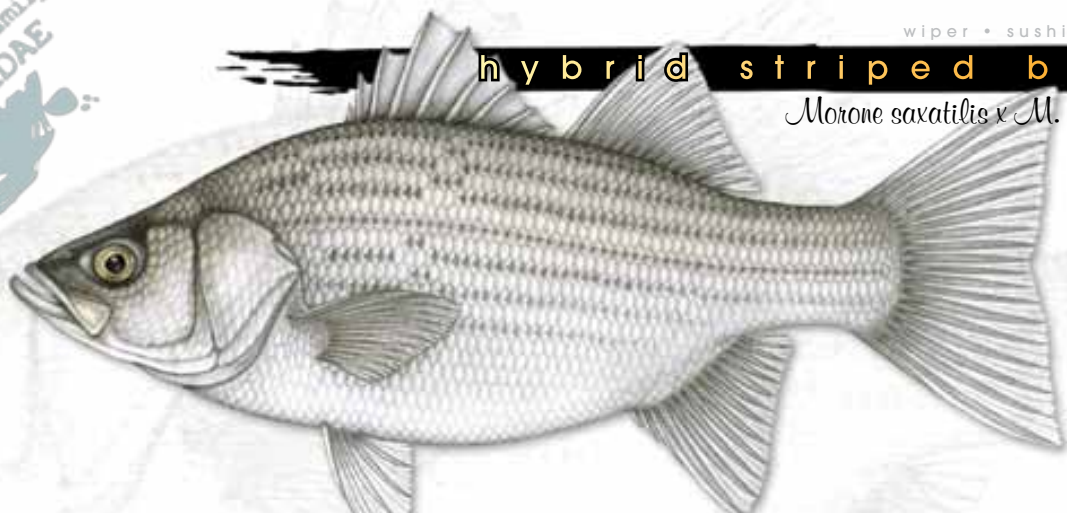




wiper • sushine bass

# h y b r i d   s t r i p e d   b a s s

*Morone saxatilis* x *M. chrysops*



26

**IDENTIFICATION:** A silver, deep-bodied fish, similar to white bass. Stripes along sides and back are distinct, usually broken, with several extending to the tail. Teeth on the base of the tongue are arranged in 2 parallel patches.

**FISHING TIPS:** Effective baits include live shad, nightcrawlers, and soft crayfish. Jigs, jigging spoons, and crankbaits are good lures for casting. Trolling with large deep-diving crankbaits can be productive. Fish live baits near the bottom. They can often be found by watching gulls circling and feeding on the water. This happens when schools of hybrid striped bass herd gizzard shad to the water's surface where the shad are easier to catch. Hybrids are fast growing fish that are hard fighters when hooked.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 12-22 inches and weigh 1-5 pounds, but may grow to 16 pounds in Ohio

**FOOD:** Larval insects, worms, and small fish

**SPAWNING:** Does not occur naturally, those found in Ohio waters are stocked by the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** This fish has been stocked in several impoundments in Ohio and the Ohio River. Hybrid stripers often use open water habitat, and are more tolerant of warmer water than striped bass.

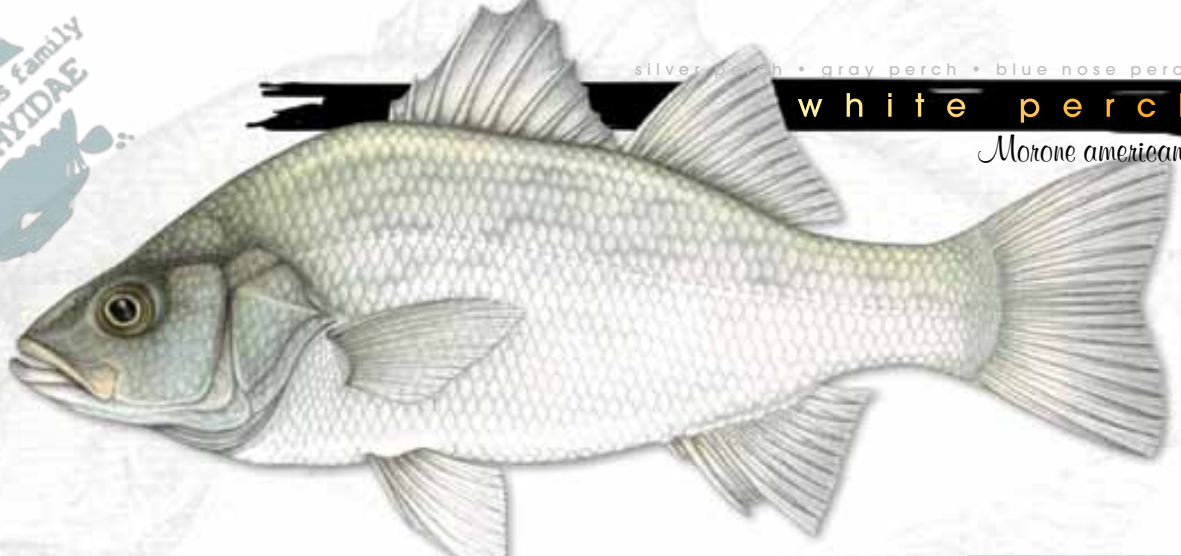




silver perch • gray perch • blue nose perch

# white perch

*Morone americana*



27

**IDENTIFICATION:** Olive to silver-gray in color with a bluish tint on the lower jaw. A lack of dark lines on its sides distinguishes it from the white bass.

**FISHING TIPS:** The best angling occurs in spring near shore and in major tributaries. Good fall catches can occur at various water depths using spreaders with minnows, shiners, red worms, or cut bait fished near the bottom.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 7-12 inches and weigh 1/4 - 1 pound

**FOOD:** Larval insects, crayfish, small fish, and are known to feed extensively on the eggs of other species

**SPAWNING:** White perch spawn in shallow tributary waters in April and May. Small adhesive eggs are randomly released in shallow riffle areas.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Originally found in brackish waters along the Atlantic Coast from Nova Scotia to Georgia, white perch are now present throughout Lake Erie. Recently found in the Ohio River. Prefers clear water with little preference for bottom type.







muskie

# muskellunge

*Esox masquinongy*



28

**IDENTIFICATION:** A long, slender fish with a large mouth and numerous teeth. Scales on cheeks are found only on the upper half and gill cover. Muskies lack a spiny dorsal fin, but do have a soft-rayed fin and soft-rayed ventral fin, both just in front of the tail. Muskies have 7-11 sensory pores on the underside of each side of the lower jaw.

**FISHING TIPS:** Bait casting and trolling large plugs, spoons, and spinner baits are the most popular ways to catch muskies.

**ADULT SIZE:** Males typically range from 22-39 inches and weigh 3-21 pounds; females typically range from 22-50 inches and weigh from 3-40 pounds.

**FOOD:** Soft-rayed fish such as suckers and gizzard shad

**SPAWNING:** Usually in April when the water temperature reaches the low 50s. Eggs are dropped on soft shallow bottoms where they adhere to vegetation and other debris. Females will drop as many as 200,000 eggs. Reproduction in Ohio is limited to non-existent.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Historically abundant in Lake Erie and larger streams in the Ohio River drainage. Today found primarily in lakes where they have been stocked and occasionally in Lake Erie and Ohio River tributaries. Ideal habitat is heavily vegetated with submerged stumps, brush, and logs and water 3-4 feet deep.







# northern pike

*Esox lucius*



29

**IDENTIFICATION:** Lower half of the gill cover is scaleless with a fully scaled cheek. Northern pike usually have fewer than 7 sensory pores on the underside of each side of the lower jaw.

**FISHING TIPS:** Large minnows or chubs seem to be more productive than artificial lures.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 20-32 inches and weigh 2-10 pounds

**FOOD:** Soft-rayed fish such as shad and suckers but will take nearly anything they can fit in their mouth, including frogs, muskrats, and small ducks.

**SPAWNING:** Soon after the ice-out in late February or early March, Northern pike move in tributary streams to spawn. Natural reproduction in Ohio outside of Lake Erie is limited. Females spread between 15,000 to 75,000 eggs freely into vegetated areas. As the eggs settle they adhere to vegetation, rocks, sticks and other debris until they hatch in about two weeks.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Once abundant in Lake Erie, Northern pike are now primarily limited to the marshes and bays of the Western Basin of Lake Erie.

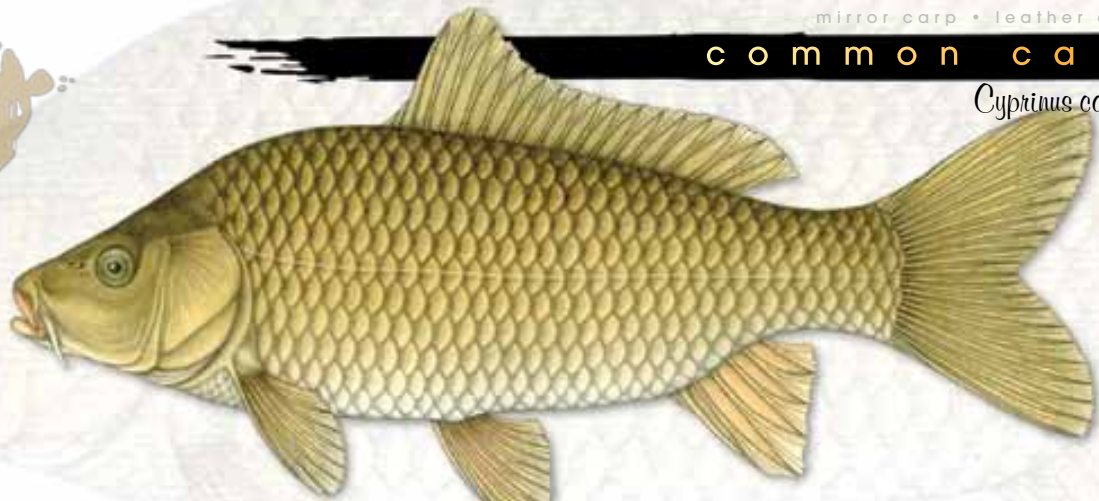




mirror carp • leather carp

# common carp

*Cyprinus carpio*



30

**IDENTIFICATION:** A stout, bronze-gold to golden-yellow fish with a yellowish belly. The upper jaw has two barbels on each side, the largest at the back of the jaw. Partially scaled or scales individuals are often called “half-scaled,” “mirror,” or “leather” carp.

**FISHING TIPS:** Dough balls, worms, crayfish tails, or similar baits fished on the bottom often produce good catches of carp. Bowfishing, gigging, snagging, and spearing are also popular ways of harvesting carp, especially when receding water levels leave them stranded in shallow pools.

**ADULT SIZE:** Generally between 1-10 pounds, occasionally up to 50-60 pounds and 40 inches long

**FOOD:** Primarily insect larvae, crustaceans, mollusks, and small fish

**SPAWNING:** In shallow waters during April into June. Eggs are scattered in vegetation, debris, or roots in 1-4 feet of water. Large females lay between 100,000 and 500,000 eggs.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Originally found in Europe and Asia, but introduced into North America in the 1870s. Now found in warm lakes, rivers, streams, and ponds throughout Ohio. Carp prefer turbid waters rich in organic matter and do not multiply readily in clear, cool waters.

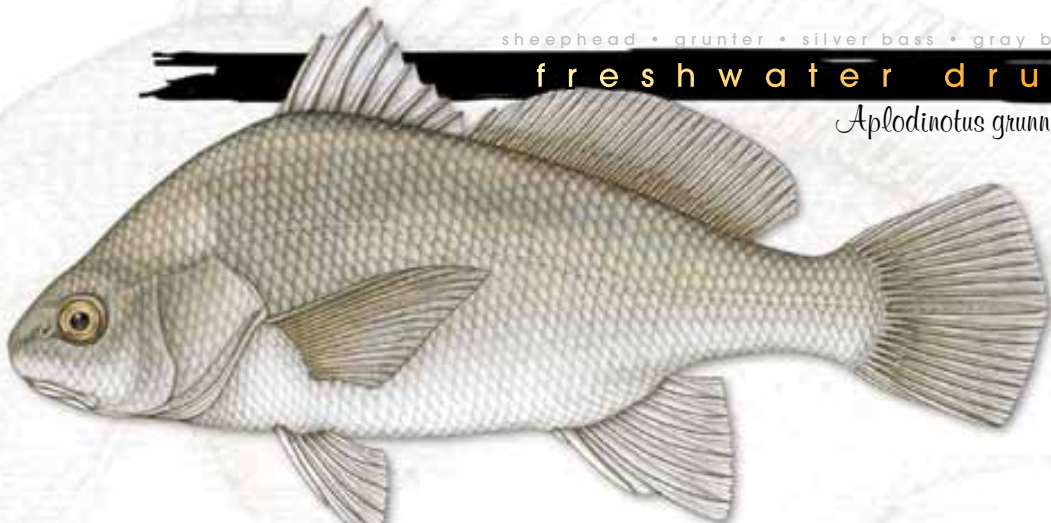




sheephead • grunter • silver bass • gray bass

## freshwater drum

*Aplodinotus grunniens*



31

**IDENTIFICATION:** Silver-gray in color and rounded tail

**FISHING TIPS:** Frequently taken by anglers fishing for other species with both artificial and live baits.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 12-30 inches; can reach 20 pounds or more

**FOOD:** Larval insects, crayfish, small fish, snails, and zebra mussels

**SPAWNING:** In spring to late summer; usually peaks in July when water temperatures reach 70°F. Eggs are buoyant and float near the surface of the water.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Large shallow lakes and big rivers. Most abundant in Lake Erie. In rivers they normally inhabit deeper pools.

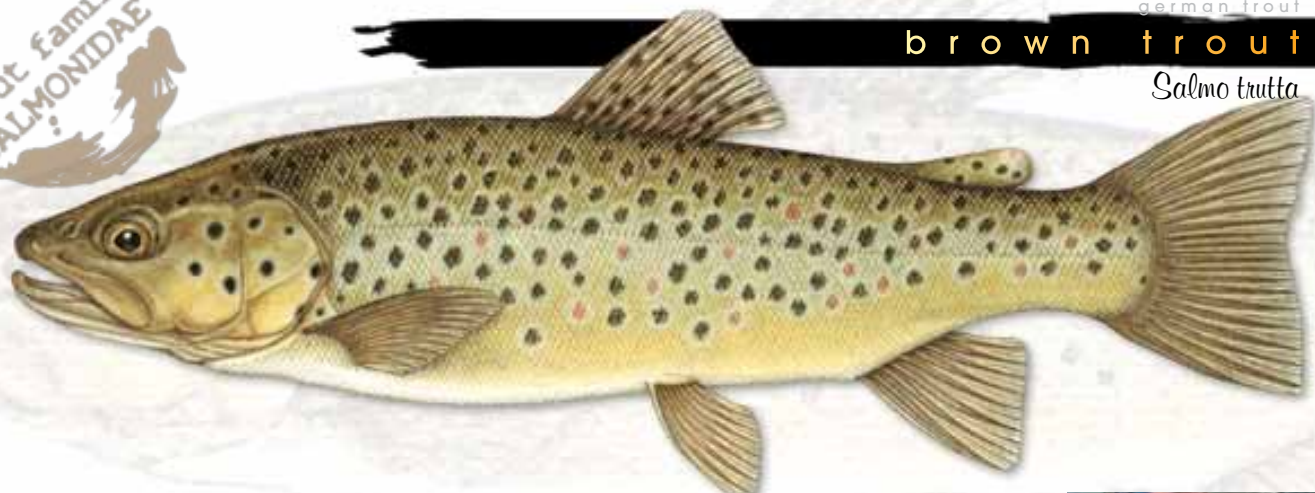




german trout

# brown trout

*Salmo trutta*



32

**IDENTIFICATION:** Color ranges from brown to gold on back with a cream to slate-colored belly. Have black, yellow, gray, or occasionally red spots surrounded by a white halo. The adipose fin between dorsal and caudal fin is prominent with spots. There are no spots on squarish tail or wavy markings on back region.

**FISHING TIPS:** Fishing is most successful in the fall through late spring, or during early and late hours during the summer. Brown trout are usually pursued with fly fishing equipment, with patterns that match local hatches or nymphs of caddisfly, stonefly, or mayfly. Fly patterns of ants, crickets, grasshoppers, and “wooly buggers” also produce nice catches. Live bait such as nightcrawlers, leeches, crayfish, minnows, and maggots can also be productive.

**FOOD:** Small fish and insects

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 10-13 inches; maximum of 29 inches

**SPAWNING:** Brown trout do not naturally reproduce in Ohio. Division of Wildlife hatcheries rear brown trout for roughly one year before stocking them.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Native to Europe. The Ohio Division of Wildlife currently stocks brown trout in selected streams. Preferred habitat includes coldwater streams with boulders, cobble, logs, rootwads, and overhead cover.







steelhead

# rainbow trout

*Oncorhynchus mykiss*



33

**IDENTIFICATION:** Has an adipose fin, squarish to rounded tail, black spots throughout. Rainbow trout have 10-12 anal rays and a white mouth and gums (coho and chinook salmon, occasionally found in Lake Erie, have gray or black gums, more anal rays, and forked tails). Lake Erie steelhead are generally bright silver with a bright pink band. Males develop a hooked jaw known as a “kype” during the spawning season.

**FISHING TIPS:** Most steelhead trout caught in Lake Erie are caught while trolling deep running crankbaits and spoons for walleye. In the early fall, however, shore anglers east of Cleveland begin catching steelhead using spoons or jigs tipped with maggots. After fish begin moving upstream later in the fall, spawn bags, salmon eggs, flies, minnows, and worms can be productive. The best locations for steelhead are pools with deep water (2 feet or more) with

some current. Steelhead prefer slower moving water in the winter, but move into shallower, swifter water in the spring where they are often caught on flies, spinners, minnow-shaped crankbaits, and jigs with maggots.

**ADULT SIZE:** Normally 20-23 inches, but can grow to 36 inches and 19 pounds

**FOOD:** Small fish and aquatic insects

**SPAWNING:** Natural reproduction is rare in Ohio.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Not native to Ohio, but introduced throughout coldwater locations in the state. Prefers coldwater streams with cobble, boulders, deep pools, and overhead cover. In Ohio, rainbow trout stocked into coldwater streams move to Lake Erie for a year or two then return to that stream in the fall through spring months. These fish are referred to as steelhead trout.

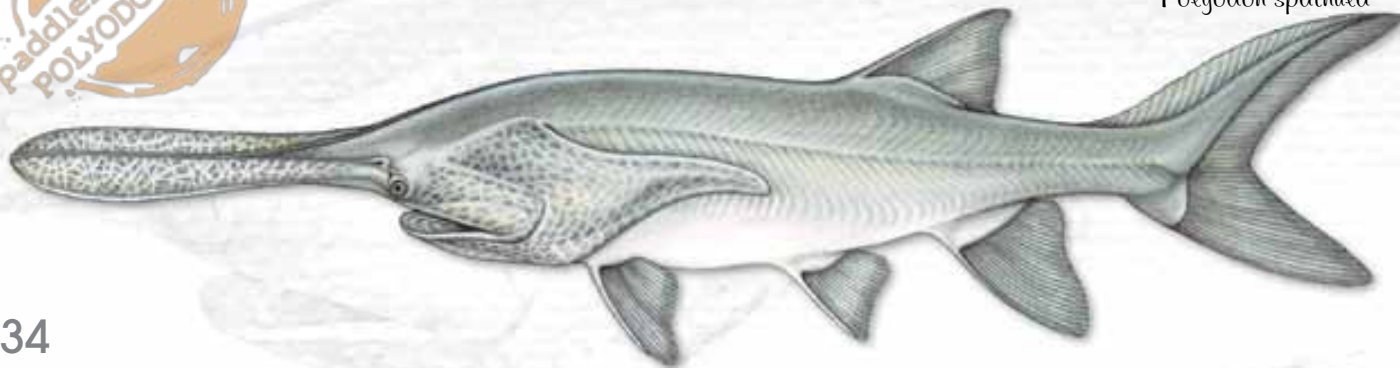




spoonbill

paddlefish

*Polyodon spathula*



34

**IDENTIFICATION:** No other fish in Ohio resembles it. Long paddle-shaped snout. Blue-gray color, large toothless mouth, small eyes, scaleless skin, cartilaginous skeleton (no true bones).

**ADULT SIZE:** Juveniles usually 1-4 feet in length, adults larger. Can reach over 5 feet in length and weigh over 100 pounds.

**ATTENTION:** Paddlefish are listed as a threatened species in Ohio. If you catch one, you must release it.

**THREATENED**  
s p e c i e s

**FOOD:** Young and adult fish filter zooplankton and small insect larvae from the water with their long gill rakers.

**SPAWNING:** In the spring during high flows in areas of submerged gravel and cobble bars. A late maturing species: males reach sexual maturity at 7-9 years; females at 10-12 years.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Found in the Ohio River and its larger tributaries up to the first dam. Prefers sluggish pools and backwaters of these rivers and streams.

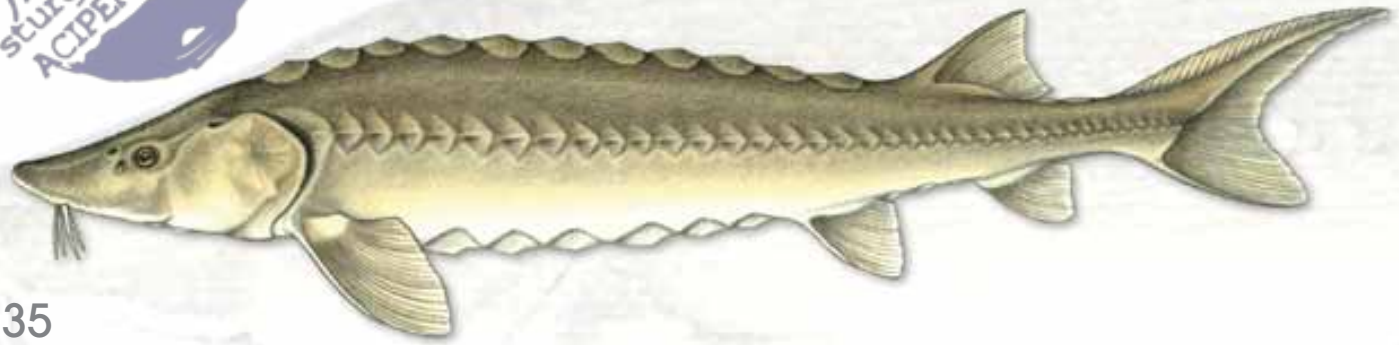


sturgeon family  
ACIPENSERIDAE

great lakes sturgeon • rock sturgeon

# lake sturgeon

*Acipenser fulvescens*



35

**IDENTIFICATION:** Numerous body plates on its back, sides, and belly. Coarse textured skin is scaleless. Four long barbels on its snout.

**ADULT SIZE:** Can exceed 6 feet and 200 pounds. Lake sturgeon can live as long as 150 years.

**FOOD:** Larval insects, crayfish, some fish, and plant material

**ATTENTION:** Because this is a state endangered species, if you catch one, you must release it.

# ENDANGERED

s p e c i e s

**SPAWNING:** In April or May. Requires river or lake habitats with clean cobble to boulder substrates for spawning. Preferred spawning depth is between 2 and 15 feet. Females reach sexual maturity at 20 to 25 years of age and carry 4,000 to 5,000 eggs per pound of body weight. Individuals will only spawn once every four to seven years.

**RANGE AND HABITAT:** Historically found in large rivers and lakes. In Ohio, it is classified as a state endangered species. Present in Lake Erie, but probably extirpated in the Ohio River drainage after that system was impounded in 1916.



common fish you may encounter in ohio

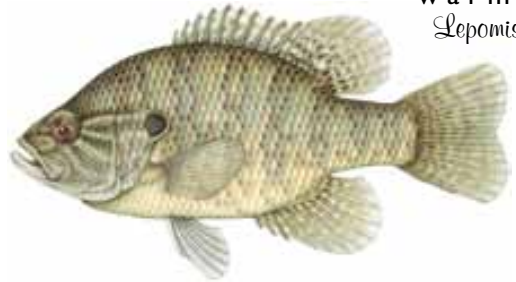
longnose gar

*Lepisosteus osseus*



warmouth

*Lepomis gulosus*



striped shiner

*Luxilus chrysocephalus*

36



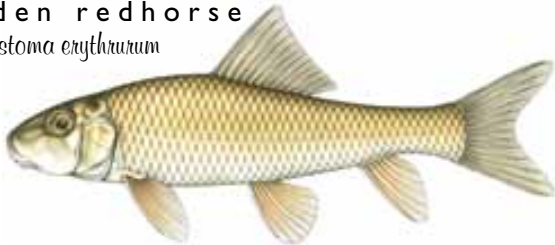
black redhorse

*Moxostoma duquesnei*



golden redhorse

*Moxostoma erythrum*



southern redbelly dace

*Phoxinus erythrogaster*





northern hog sucker

*Hypentelium nigricans*



logperch darter

*Percina caprodes*



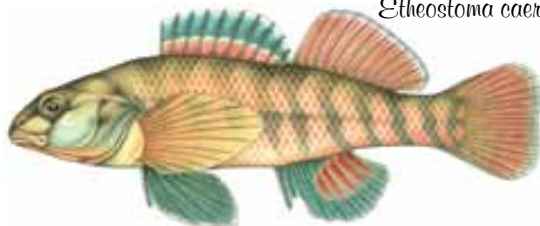
greenside darter

*Etheostoma blennioides*



rainbow darter

*Etheostoma caeruleum*



johnny darter

*Etheostoma nigrum*





# F I S H I N G F U N D A M E N T A L S

Generations of anglers began fishing as kids by using simple canepole rigs. Some even used a long stick, a piece of string, a cork, and a fish hook. Today, basic fishing equipment is more sophisticated, but still easy to use. Listed below is what you will need as a beginner learning the fundamentals of fishing.

Your safety, and the safety of others, is a vital part of fishing. Careless use of fishing equipment can result in an injury. As you learn the fundamentals of fishing and become more confident in your level of skill, safe fishing practices will become automatic. But always regard safety as an important part of learning how to fish. Look for this symbol ( + ) for some safety tips.



### **RODS AND REELS**

For most young anglers, a 5- or 5 1/2-foot light-action fishing rod equipped with a spinning reel is best. Spinning and baitcasting tackle is more appropriate for more experienced anglers.

- ⊕ Be careful how you carry and cast your fishing pole; it's longer than you think and can easily strike someone in the face. Give yourself plenty of open space to cast safely.



### **BOBBERS**

Surface floats, or bobbers, are designed to keep a bait hook suspended at a specific depth. They also help to signal when a fish has taken the bait. Use a bobber that is large enough to suspend your bait and sinker.



### **HOOKS**

Hooks come in a variety of sizes and styles. Small hooks in size 6, 8, or 10 are good for panfish. Sizes 4 to 2/0 are best for most bass and walleyes. Large hooks in sizes above 2/0 are used for catfish, large bass, and muskie.

- ⊕ Always handle fishing hooks with extreme care, as they are sharp and can cause serious injury.



### **LINE**

Fishing lines come in a variety of styles and strengths. For general purposes, monofilament in the 4 to 8 pound test range will work well. Anglers seeking large fish like flathead catfish and muskie may want to consider lines in the 20 to 30 pound test range.

- ⊕ Throw tangled or unused line in the trash. Loose line often presents a hazard to waterfowl and other wild animals.



### **SINKERS**

A sinker is a weight designed to keep a bait down in the water. Sinkers come in a variety of sizes and styles for different uses. Some sinkers are made to keep a bait on the bottom, while others are made to suspend a bait beneath a bobber.

- ⊕ Don't use your mouth to tie a knot around a sinker or to place a piece of split shot on fishing line; you might accidentally swallow it.

## WATER

Always wear a personal flotation device (life jacket) when fishing from a boat. Do not fish in rivers or streams when they become flooded. Be very careful when fishing from shore not to get so close to the edge that you might fall in the water. Shore anglers should wear personal flotation devices, too.



## BUGS

Insect repellent will greatly reduce annoyances with bugs and insects, allowing your fishing experience to be an enjoyable one.

## KNIVES

Fillet and pocket knives are handy to have when fishing, but are even more dangerous than hooks. Take special care to handle knives safely.

## SUNLIGHT

Wear protective clothing and limit exposure to direct sunlight. Use a quality sunscreen when outdoors on sunny days. Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.



## WILDOHIO.COM

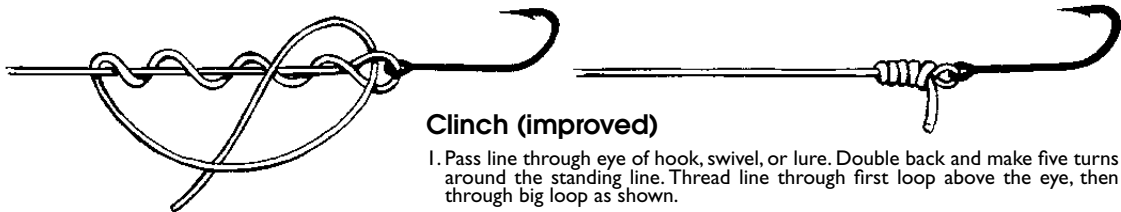
Young anglers today have unprecedented opportunities to learn about aquatic resources. These opportunities include participation in angler education courses, Aquatic Project WILD, fishing clinics, conservation club activities, and other programs sponsored by the Division of Wildlife. For more information on the Division's aquatic resources education program or to access many of our publications and information on fishing go to our Website: [wildohio.com](http://wildohio.com)





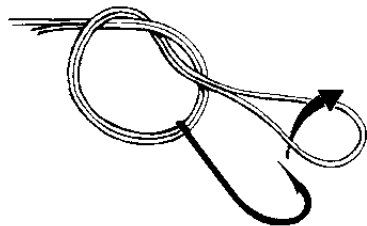
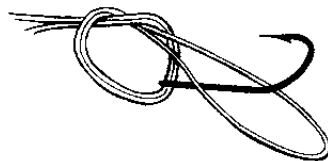
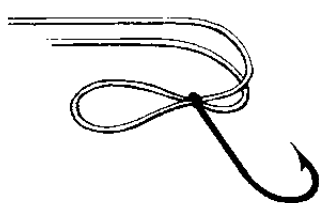


# COMMON KNOTS



## Clinch (improved)

1. Pass line through eye of hook, swivel, or lure. Double back and make five turns around the standing line. Thread line through first loop above the eye, then through big loop as shown.
2. Hold tag end and standing line while coils are pulled up. Moisten and slide tight against eye. Clip tag end.



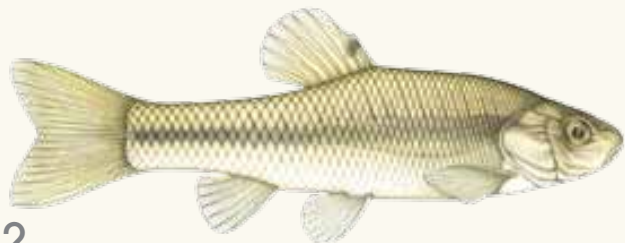
## Palomar

1. Double about 4 inches of line and pass loop through eye.
2. Let hook hang loose and tie overhand knot in doubled line.
3. Pull loop of line far enough to pass over hook, swivel, or lure.
4. Pull tag end and standing line to tighten. Moisten before fully tightening. Clip tag end.

# POPULAR BAIT

## POPULAR LIVE BAIT

42



**FATHEAD MINNOW:** Fatheads are found in small creeks, especially in muddy ones, and in ponds and small lakes, mainly in western Ohio. They are one of the most commonly used bait minnows in Ohio. Fatheads are propagated and sold at bait stores throughout the state. Fatheads grow to about 3 inches.



**NORTHERN CREEK CHUB:** The creek chub lives in most Ohio streams. It is a versatile minnow, growing to 10 inches or more. The smaller 1- to 4- inch minnows are used for crappie and bass fishing. The bigger chubs are good bait for catfish, pike, and muskies.



**COMMON EMERALD SHINER:** Emerald shiners are popular and abundant Lake Erie bait fish that are also found in the Ohio River and some of its tributaries. Lake Erie perch fishermen rely on the emerald shiner as the most popular bait for yellow perch.



**GOLDEN SHINER:** This large shiner reaches a length of 7 inches or more. It can be found in low gradient streams, marshes, and farm ponds and is sold in some bait stores. Golden shiners are used mostly by largemouth bass and pike fishermen.



**SPOTTAIL SHINER:** This shiner is abundant in Lake Erie and is a very popular bait with smallmouth bass fishermen.



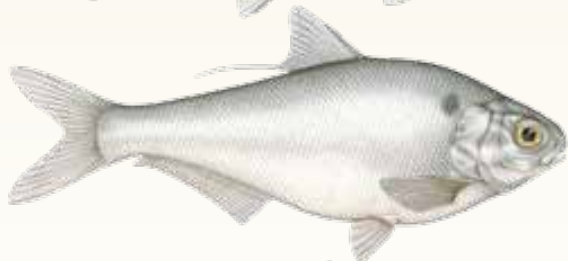
**BLUNTNOSE MINNOW:** The bluntnose minnow is widespread throughout the state. Millions are taken annually from streams and used as bait. This small minnow is a good bait for bass, crappies, and other panfish.



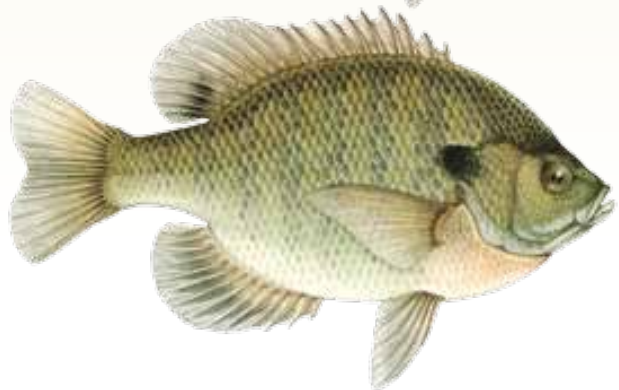
**OHIO STONEROLLER MINNOW:** This minnow lives in streams having sandy-gravel bottoms. Males grow to 6 inches in length.



**COMMON WHITE SUCKER:** Abundant throughout the state, common white suckers may grow more than 20 inches long. Those in the 4- to 12-inch size range are used by catfish, muskie, and pike anglers. Smaller ones, 2 to 4 inches long, are used for bass, walleyes, and panfish.



**GIZZARD SHAD:** This shad is a good bait for hybrid striped bass, striped bass and catfish. Gizzard shad are found in waters throughout the state. Small shad are used whole; the larger ones are cut up and used as "cut bait."



**BLUEGILL:** The bluegill is a popular bait used on trotlines and banklines for flathead catfish and large channel catfish. Small bluegills are used by bass anglers. Other sunfish and small game fish may also be used for bait if they are acquired legally.



**LEECHES:** Leeches occur in waters throughout the state. These annelid worms have a sucker-type mouth and reach a length of 3 to 4 inches. They are used to catch walleye, smallmouth bass, rock bass, and panfish.



**NIGHT CRAWLERS:** These large earthworms are Ohio's most popular fish bait. Most are collected at night when they come to the surface of the ground. Just about any Ohio fish can be caught on a night crawler.



**RED WORMS:** These small earthworms rank close to night crawlers in their popularity with fish and anglers. The smaller worms are great for panfish.



**WAX WORMS:** Wax worms are the larval stage of the bee moth, or wax moth. The small white worms are excellent bait for bluegills, crappies, and rock bass.



**CRAYFISH:** Crayfish are an excellent bait for smallmouth bass, rock bass, catfish, and several other kinds of fish. Crayfish occupy most Ohio waters. Soft craws—crayfish in the soft-shelled stage of their molt—are preferred by many anglers.

**HELLGRAMMITES:** This aquatic larva of the dobsonfly is an excellent fish bait. It is found under rocks in riffles of gravel bottomed, high gradient streams. It is used to catch smallmouth bass, rock bass, channel catfish, sunfish, and several other kinds of fish.

**MAGGOTS OR MOUSIES:** These are the larval stage of a fly. The small, light-colored, wormlike larvae are excellent bait for bluegills, crappies, perch, and other panfish.

**OTHER:** Other live baits used by Ohio anglers include water dogs, tadpoles, frogs, crickets, grasshoppers, and other insects.

# Filleting Your Fish

## FIRST, KEEP YOUR CATCH FRESH

Fish is a very perishable food. If you plan to bring fish home from a fishing trip, keep your catch alive as long as possible. A good stringer, fish basket or boat live well is fine for short periods, especially when the water is cool. But the best way to keep fish fresh for a long trip is to put them directly on ice.

When you are ready to fillet the fish, first examine it for freshness. The gills should be red or bright pink and moist, not white or dull pink and slimy. Fish odor should not be excessive; the eyes should appear fresh and clear.

## GET THE RIGHT KNIFE

A good fillet knife has a long, thin, flexible blade which should be kept sharp. It is helpful to have a smooth, flat board to use as a cutting surface when you are filleting fish.



### Knife inserted behind gill cover

To start, make sure the fish is dead to avoid injuring yourself. Make the first cut behind the gill cover. Be careful to cut only until the knife touches the backbone. Do not cut through it.



### Knife into fish along the rib cage

Turn the fish end-for-end and run the knife along the backbone and dorsal fin. Cut deep enough to bounce the knife along the top of the rib cage.



### Knife through the fish and cutting toward tail

When the knife blade no longer contacts the rib cage, push the knife through the width of the fish. The blade will exit on the bottom of the fish near the vent. Continue cutting along the bone until the fillet is cut off at the tail.



### Cutting meat from rib cage

**option 1)** Hold the fillet away from the rib cage and carefully cut the meat away from the ribs by running the knife along the ribs. Cut through to the belly and remove the fillet.

**option 2)** Cut through the rib cage and remove the ribs along with the fillet. An additional step is then required to cut the ribs away from the meat.



### Removing skin

Remove the skin from the fillet by inserting the knife at the tail and cutting the meat from the skin. Hold the fillet in position by pressing down on the skin, with your fingers. Repeat the same steps on the other side of the fish.

Make sure to keep the fish cool during the filleting process.

Fish will taste best if they are cooked soon after they are caught. Fish can be stored in a refrigerator for up to two days, but if you cannot cook them within that time they should be frozen.

The best freezing method is to submerge the fillets completely in a container of cold water. Plastic freezer bags, freezer containers and paper milk cartons are good freezing packages. Tightly seal the container and freeze it. This method helps prevent freezer burn or drying and preserves the fine flavor of your catch.



Fish recipes can be found at [wildohio.com](http://wildohio.com)



If you catch a catfish, the same basic filleting instructions apply. You do need to be more cautious in the way you handle the fish

#### Knife inserted behind gill cover

To start, make sure the fish is dead to avoid injuring yourself. Keep your hand clear of the barb. Make the first cut behind the gill cover. Be careful to cut only until the knife touches the backbone. Do not cut through it.



#### Knife into fish along the rib cage

Turn the fish end-for-end and run the knife along the backbone and dorsal fin. Cut deep enough to bounce the knife along the top of the rib cage. Cut around the "belly fat" of the fish. It is more jelly-like in appearance and not good tasting.



#### Knife through the fish and cutting toward tail

When the knife blade no longer contacts the rib cage, push the knife through the width of the fish. The blade will exit on the bottom of the fish near the vent. Continue cutting along the bone until the fillet is cut off at the tail.



#### Removing skin

Remove the skin from the fillet by inserting the knife at the tail and cutting the meat from the skin. Hold the fillet in position by pressing down on the skin, with your fingers. Repeat the same steps on the other side of the fish.

**Additional Preparations** • Most sportfish taken in Ohio are safe to eat, but chemicals such as mercury and PCBs' have been found in some fish from certain waters. To reduce your exposure to these contaminants properly trim, skin, and cook your catch. Remove the skin and trim all the fat from the belly flap, the line along the sides of the fish, along the back, and under the skin. Cooking does not destroy contaminants in fish, but heat from cooking melts some of the fat in fish. Broil, grill, or bake the skinned fish on a rack so the fat drips away. Do not use the drippings to prepare sauces or gravies.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# DIVISION OF WILDLIFE



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