

Learn & Color Nature Series



Freshwater Fish



Pumpkinseed Sunfish



Yellow Perch

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Learn and Color Nature Series – Freshwater Fish
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Sample Pages from Learn and Color Nature Series – Freshwater Fish

Black Crappies

Pomoxis nigromaculatus

Description

Black Crappies are a very popular sport fish, as they are easy to catch during their feeding times. There are minimal number and size restriction limits for fishing the crappie species.



Key Indication Marks

Black Crappie have deep bodies, and their head, back, and sides are mottled with dusky or black blotches. These blotches do not form vertical bars as they do on White Crappie. Adults are typically 5-12 inches and about one pound, but can reach up to 18 inches and upwards of three pounds.

Lures to Use

Spinnerbait, Jig Bodies, including Curly-Tail Grubs and Tubes, Live Minnows, grubs, and man-made soft baits also work well.

Region

The black crappie's range is uncertain, since it has been widely transplanted, but it is found in the eastern United States and Canada, and as of 2005, populations existed in all of the 48 contiguous states.

Habitat


Lakes, reservoirs, borrow pits, and navigation pools in large rivers. They prefer areas with little or no current, clear water, and abundant cover such as submerged timber or aquatic vegetation, as well as sand or mud bottoms like those found in lakes, ponds, streams, and sloughs.

Tips to Catch


Use Spider rigging, slip-float rigs, and even bobber rigs. Fish the Right Depth – Crappie can usually be found between three and six feet of water. Keep the Line Tight – Crappie are known to have a soft lip. This means that they can learn easily and shake your hook if the line isn't kept tight enough.



Easy to Catch



Black Crappies



Common Carp

Common Carp

Cyprinus carpio

Description

As schooling fish, Common Carp prefer to be in groups of five or more. They easily survive winter in a frozen-over pond, as long as some free water remains below the ice. Carp are able to tolerate water with very low oxygen levels, by gulping air at the surface. Because they survive rough conditions, they are often considered a destructive invasive species in many countries. Kai fish are all specially bred variety of common carp.



Key Indication Marks

The Common Carp has a variety of colors and shapes, but its scales are always large and thick. Wild carp usually have elongated bodies that are brownish-green to golden yellow with darker colored fins. Their mouths are pointed downward with thick lips.

Lures to Use

Carp eat a large number of different foods, so your lure and bait choices are not limited. They have been known to go for insects, aquatic worms, crustaceans, and mollusks, but they also consume algae and other plants. You can also try corn, cherry tomatoes, carp bait, and nightcrawlers.

Region

The Common Carp is native to Eastern Europe and much of Asia, in addition to every State in the US besides Alaska.

Habitat

Carp prefer large bodies of slow or standing water and soft, vegetative sediments.

Tips to Catch

Try using a black malle hook. If using corn or other colorful baits, a different colored hook is fine, but try to avoid bright or shiny hooks on line if you are fishing in murky water. Carp are known for gently striking a few times before actually taking a bite. Let them go at your bait a few times before trying to set a hook.



Not so Easy to Catch

Alligator Gar

Atractosteus spatula

Description

Alligator gar are the largest species in the gar family, and among the largest freshwater fishes found in North America. They were once considered a nuisance, and were slaughtered until their population declined greatly. They have since become a trophy fish, and there are several organizations tagging and tracking the gar in order to better understand their species. The scales of alligator gar are not like the scales of other fish which have flexible elasmoid scales; their bodies are protected by inflexible and articulated ganoid scales that are diamond-shaped, often with serrated edges, and composed of a tough inner layer of bone and hard outer layer of ganoin which is essentially homologous to tooth enamel, making them nearly impenetrable. They are known for the fight they put up when hooked. With several hundred pounds of weight behind them, alligator gar can be dangerous to reel in.

Key Indication Marks

Mature alligator gar commonly measure 6 ft in length, and weigh over 100 lbs. All gars have torpedo-shaped bodies, but some distinguishing characteristics of adult alligator gar include their large size; heavy bodies; broad heads; short, broad snouts; large, sharp teeth; and double row of teeth on their upper jaws. They are usually brown or olive fading to a lighter gray or yellow ventral surface.

Lures to Use

Try using a whole mullet that has been scaled. Also try common carp, or gizzard shad. Any medium-sized, live bait can work.

Region

Alligator gar are found in the Southern United States in reservoirs and lakes, in the backwaters of lowland rivers, and in the brackish waters of estuaries, bayous, and bays. They have occasionally been seen in the Gulf of Mexico.

Habitat

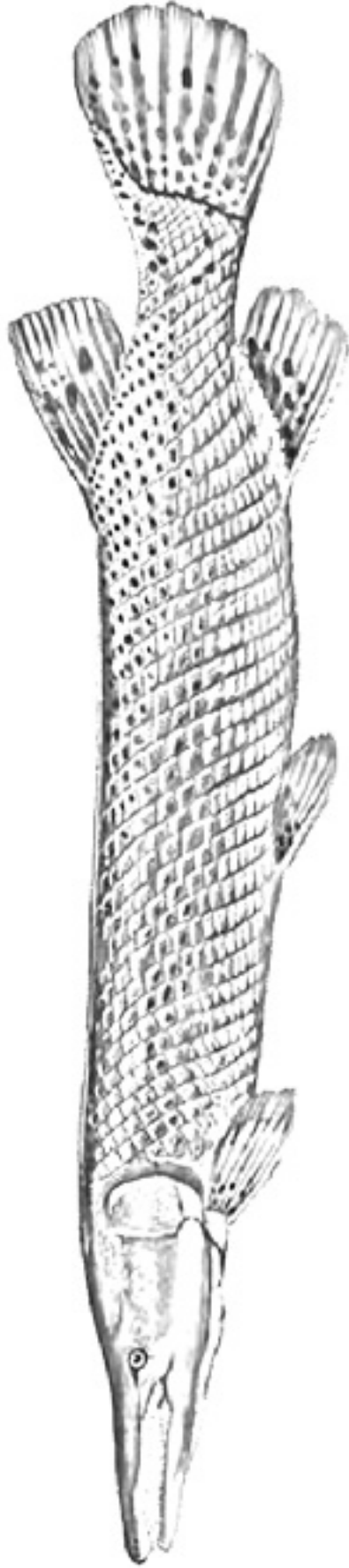
Alligator gar are found in large, slow moving rivers, reservoirs, oxbow lakes, bayous and bays, and in fresh as well as brackish water. They are very tolerant of high salinity and they have sometimes been seen to stray into salt water.

Tips to Catch

Use large circle hooks attached to a steel leader as a rig, connected to the main line with a bobber attached above the leader. Alligator are not line shy, so this does not have to be factored into your tackle. Allow the fish to take your bait and swallow before setting the hook, this way, when the bobber goes off, follow until it stops. When the fish starts to move again, set the hook and begin the battle. Always have a de-hooker with you, because alligator gar are dangerous to work with due to their sharp teeth.



Hard to Catch



Alligator Gar



Black Bullhead

Black Bullhead

Ameiurus melas

Description

The black bullhead, member of the bullhead catfish family, has the ability to thrive in waters that are low in oxygen, brackish, turbid and/or very warm. Just like catfish, they have barbels located near their mouth, broad heads, spiny fins, and no scales. They are bottom feeders, so they will eat almost anything, from grains and other plant matter to insects, dead or living fish, and crustaceans. Like other bottom feeders, black bullhead are considered trash fish, however, they have pale flesh and make excellent table fare when water quality is good, despite their small size. Bullhead have a typical length of 8-14 in, with the average adult weighing 1-2 lbs. They are most active at night.



Key Indication Marks

The color depends on the area where it is taken, but it generally is darker than brown or yellow bullheads. It can be distinguished from a flathead in that the black bullhead's lower lip does not protrude past the upper lip. They have a squared tail fin and white barbels under their mouths that they use as navigation in murkier waters.

Lures to Use

Small live bait, cheese, hotdog chunks, any prepared bait for catfish. Because they are bottom-feeders, they will bite at almost anything.

Region

Black bullheads are found in the Central United States, however, they also occur as an invasive species in large parts of Europe.

Habitat

Look for them in stagnant or slow-moving waters with soft bottoms.

Tips to Catch

Keep it simple, staying close to the bottom and using a small sinker to carry your bait down. Light tackle is less likely to spook wary fish, and all bullheads you catch will fight. Wait 3 seconds before setting the hook -- Bullheads tend to hold the bait, letting the angler reel them in, and then spitting the bait out at the last second. Fishing at night is also highly successful due to their nocturnal habits.



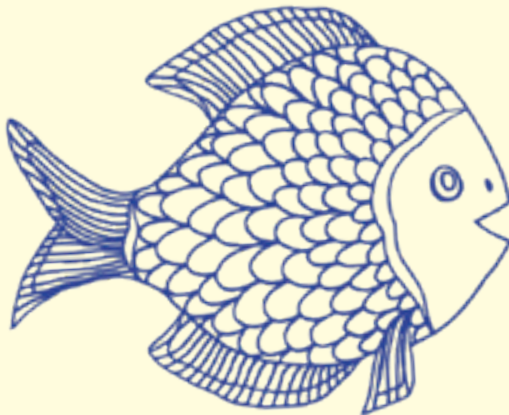
Easy to Catch

Black Crappies

Pomoxis nigromaculatus

Description

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Lures to Use

Spinnerbait, Jig Bodies, including Curly-Tail Grubs and Tubes. Live Minnows, grubs, and man-made soft baits also work well.

Region

The black crappie's range is uncertain, since it has been widely transplanted, but it is found in the eastern United States and Canada, and as of 2005, populations existed in all of the 48 contiguous states.

Habitat

Lakes, reservoirs, borrow pits, and navigation pools in large rivers. They prefer areas with little or no current, clear water, and abundant cover such as submerged timber or aquatic vegetation, as well as sand or mud bottoms like those found in lakes, ponds, streams, and sloughs.

Tips to Catch

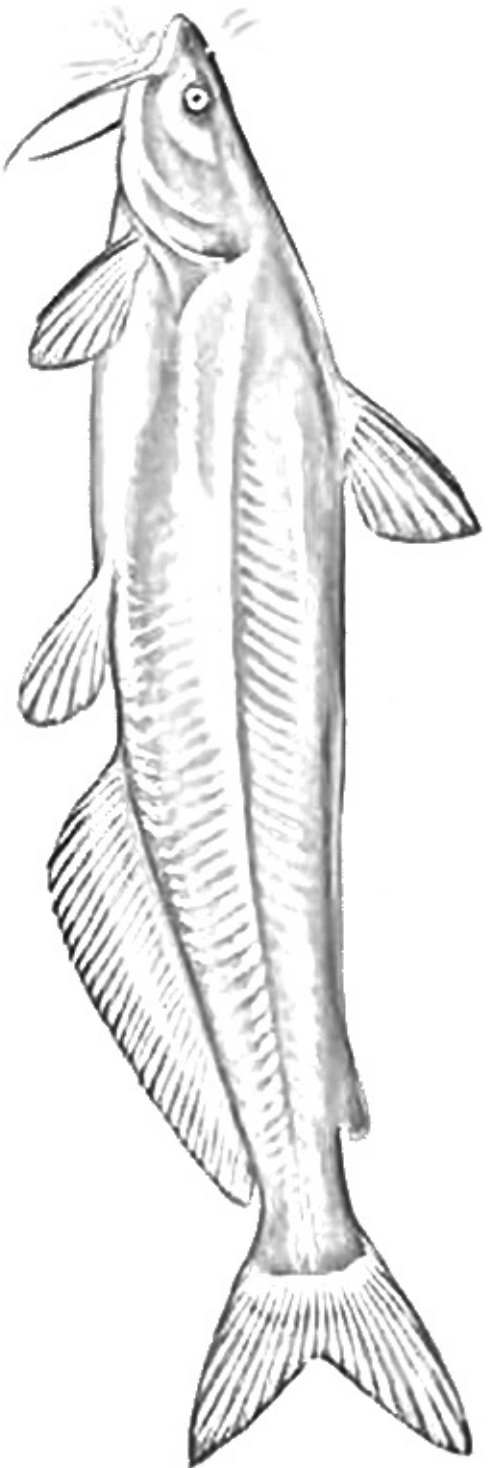
Use Spider rigging, slip-float rigs, and even bobber rigs. Fish the right depth – crappie can usually be found between three and six feet of water. Keep the line tight – crappie are known to have a soft lip. This means that they can tear easily and shake your hook if the line isn't kept tight enough.



Easy to Catch



Black Crappies



Blue Catfish

Blue Catfish

Ictalurus furcatus

Description

The blue catfish is the largest species of North American catfish, reaching a length of 65 inches and a weight of 150 pounds. Channel and blue catfish are often confused with each other, however, blue catfish do not have spots. Like other catfish, the longer the fish live, the larger they grow. In waters with mature populations, one can easily find fish that weigh up to 100 pounds. Catfish are nesting fish, which means they find crevices and caves to lay their eggs. Blue and flathead catfish are often caught using the fishing method known as "noodling". This is where a fisherman finds a catfish hole, places his hand inside until the catfish bites, and then pulls the fish out.



Key Indication Marks

Blue catfish are often misidentified as channel catfish. Blue catfish are heavy bodied, blue-ish gray in color, and have a dorsal hump. The best way to tell the difference between a channel catfish and a blue catfish is to count the number of rays on the anal fin. A blue catfish will have 30-36 rays whereas a channel catfish will have 25-29. Blue catfish also have barbels, a deeply forked tail, and a protruding upper jaw.

Lures to Use

Nightcrawlers, chicken liver, grasshoppers, minnows, cut bait, stink bait, cheese, and hot dogs

Region

The native distribution of blue catfish is primarily in the Mississippi River drainage, and the Rio Grande, and south along the Gulf Coast to Belize and Guatemala. They have also been introduced in a number of reservoirs and rivers. This fish is also found in some lakes in Florida.

Habitat

Blue catfish live in large rivers and main channels, however, they are also found in some large lakes. Like other catfish, they are bottom feeders, and prefer deep water with a current and rock or sand bottom.

Tips to Catch

Blue catfish are known to put up a fight, so be prepared with the proper line and rod, preferably a heavier weight line than you would use for other types of fish. They are attracted to bait with a strong scent trail, so use either live or freshly dead bait, if possible. Very oily bait fish will also work.



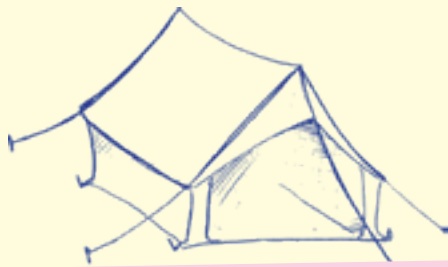
Not so Easy to Catch

Bluegill

Lepomis macrochirus

Description

The bluegill is small, but curious and notoriously spirited in nature. Many an angler has commented that, "if bluegill weighed 10 pounds, no one would fish for anything else." It is a popular game fish in the sunfish family, and is one of the best-known sunfishes throughout its original range in the freshwater habitats of the central and southern United States. Bluegills are one of the smallest popular food and game fishes, normally reaching lengths of only 6-9 inches and usually weighing less than half a pound.



Key Indication Marks

The bluegill is noted for the black spot that it has on the posterior edge of the gills and base of the dorsal fin. The sides of its head and chin are a dark shade of blue. It typically has 5-9 vertical stripes along the body, however, these are not always distinct. It has a yellowish breast and abdomen, with the breast of the breeding male being a bright orange.

Lures to Use

A bait that falls too quickly often goes overlooked by nearby bluegills. Micro jig heads in the 1/80 - 1/16 oz. range, when fished on light 2- to 4-pound line, will provide a more natural presentation than heavier jigs. Lipless crankbaits, Crickets, wax worms, and beetles.

Region

The bluegill occurs naturally in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains from coastal Virginia to Florida, west to Texas and northern Mexico, and north to western Minnesota and western New York. Today they have been introduced to almost everywhere else in North America, and have also been introduced into Europe, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Asia, South America, and Oceania.

Habitat

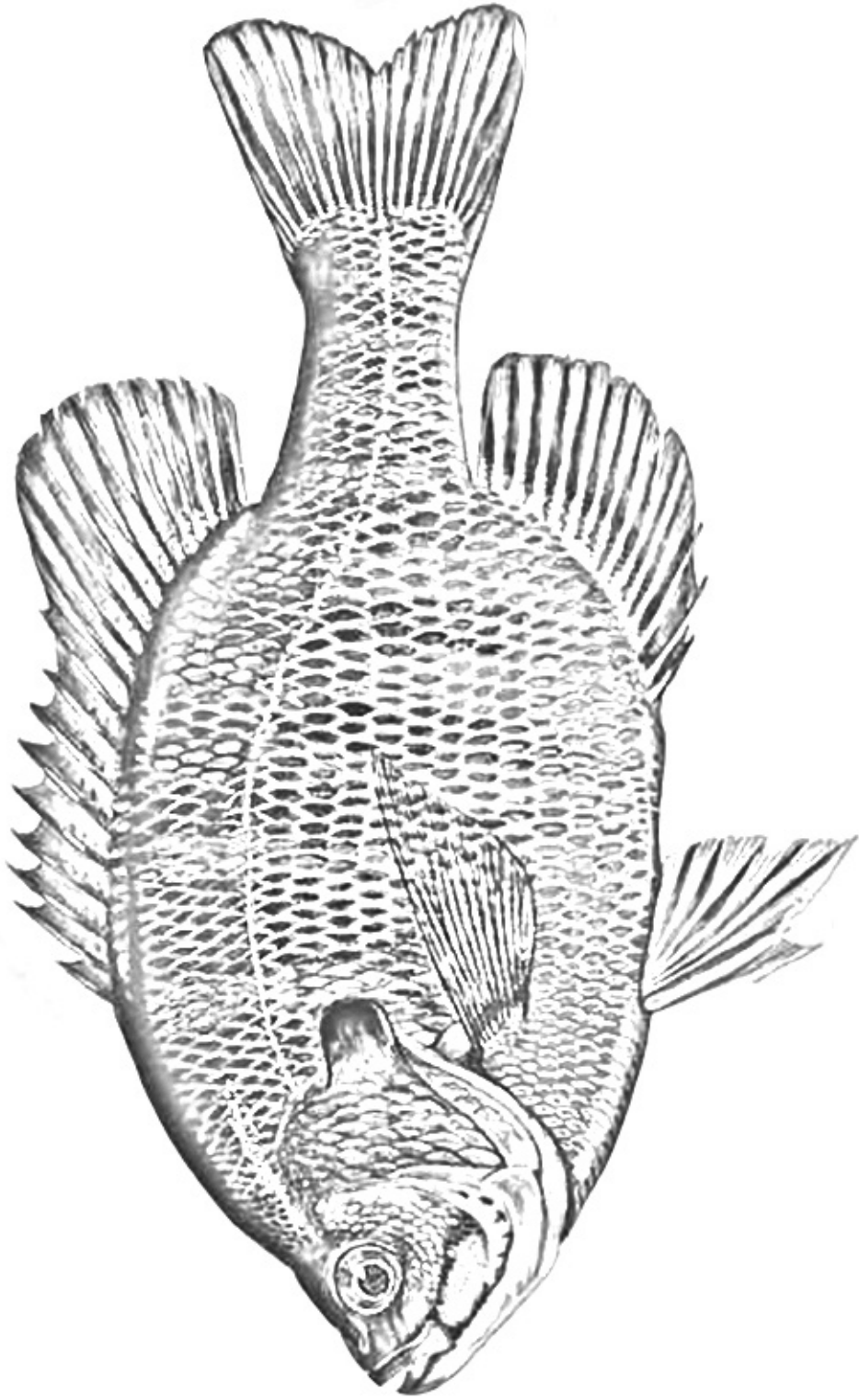
Bluegill are found in lakes and ponds, along with slow-moving areas of streams and small rivers. They prefer water with many aquatic plants, and hide within fallen logs or water weeds. They can often be found around weed beds, where they search for food.

Tips to Catch

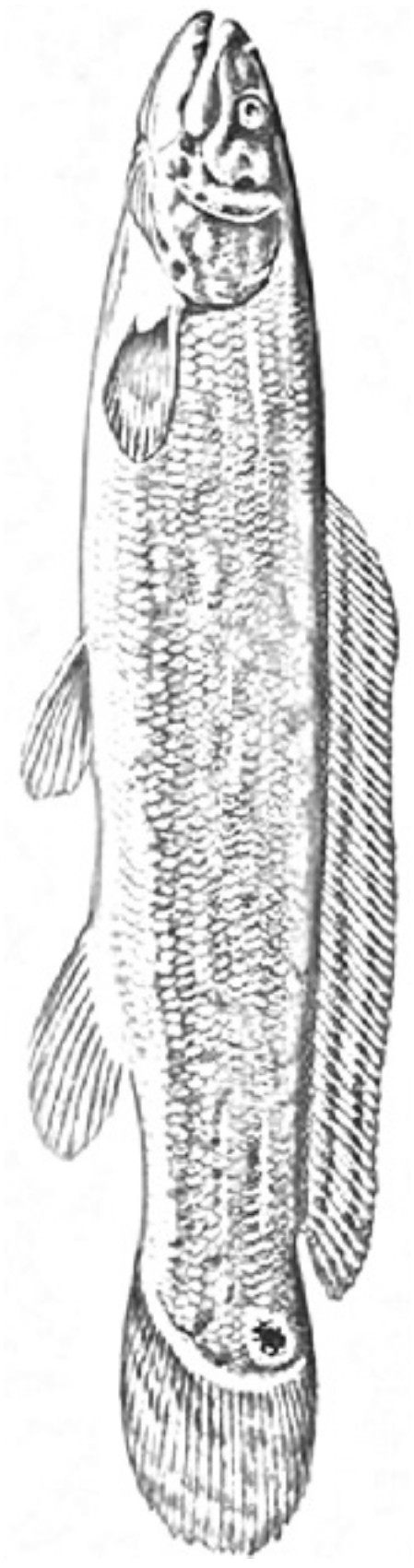
Big bluegills are curious and will race over to check out your offering—if you're in the right spot. These trophy fish find sanctuary in the depths, so to catch these deep-water fish, focus on outside weed edges and areas that offer transitions in bottom composition. Go off the beaten path, and explore areas that are not accessible to boats with outboard motors.



Easy to Catch



Bluegill



Bowfin

Bowfin

Amia calva

Description

Like gars, bowfin are bimodal breathers, which means they have the capacity to breathe both water and air. Their gills exchange gases in the water allowing them to exploit oxygen for breathing, but they also have a gas bladder that serves to maintain buoyancy, and also allows them to breathe air by means of a small pneumatic duct connected from the foregut to the gas bladder. They are regarded as taxonomic relicts, being the sole surviving species of the order Amiiformes. When hooked, they put up an impressive fight but should be handled with care when landed because of their very sharp teeth and aggressive demeanor.

Key Indication Marks

Bowfin are elongated and cylindrical, with their sides and back an olive-to-brown color, often with vertical bars, and dark reticulations, or camouflaged pattern. Their average length is 20". Bowfin are often referred to as "living fossils", or "primitive fish" because they contain some characters common to ancient predecessors, including a modified (rounded externally) heterocercal caudal fin, a highly vascularized gas bladder lung, vestiges of a spiral valve, and a bony gular plate.

Lures to Use

Crawfish, bluegills, minnows and worms work best when fishing for bowfin. They prefer wobbling live/dead bait, when possible. Other options are Minnow Spins, crawfish or shrimp mimic crankbaits.

Region

Bowfin are native to North America, and commonly found throughout much of the eastern United States, and in southern Ontario and Quebec in freshwater environments.

Habitat

Bowfin prefer vegetated sloughs, lowland rivers and lakes, swamps, backwater areas, and are occasionally found in brackish water. They are well camouflaged, and not easy to spot in slow water with abundant vegetation. They often seek shelter under roots, and submerged logs. Oxygen-poor environments can be tolerated because of their ability to breathe air.

Tips to Catch

Many anglers have lost their lures to bowfin due to their powerful jaws. Also be aware, because bowfin do hunt other fish of interest. They prefer shallows, and can strike baits near the bottom, as well as at the surface.



Easy to Catch

Brown Bullhead

Ameiurus nebulosus

Description

Brown Bullheads are opportunistic bottom feeders. They have few natural predators and are not popular with fishermen, so they have thrived. For native fish species, this predatory fish is a problem, as they are an invasive species. However, they are important as a clan symbol of the Ojibwe group of Native Americans. In their tradition, the bullhead or "wawaazisii" is one of six beings that came out of the sea to form the original clans. Bullheads are known to put up a good fight when being reeled in. As a mode of physical defense against predators, bullhead species have a sharp spine on the leading edge of their dorsal and pectoral fins. Fully grown brown bullheads are typically 8-16 inches long and 1-2 pounds, but they can reach 19 inches and upwards of 4 pounds.



Key Indication Marks

Just like other bullheads and catfish, brown bullheads do not have scales. Their body is usually yellowish brown to dark gray with dark brown mottling, with a cream or tan belly. Their fins are darkly pigmented.

Lures to Use

Small live bait, cheese, hotdog chunks, any prepared bait for catfish. Because they are bottom-feeders, they will bite at almost anything.

Region

Found from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to Mobile Bay, Alabama, and in the St. Lawrence- Great Lakes, Hudson Bay, and Mississippi River basins

Habitat

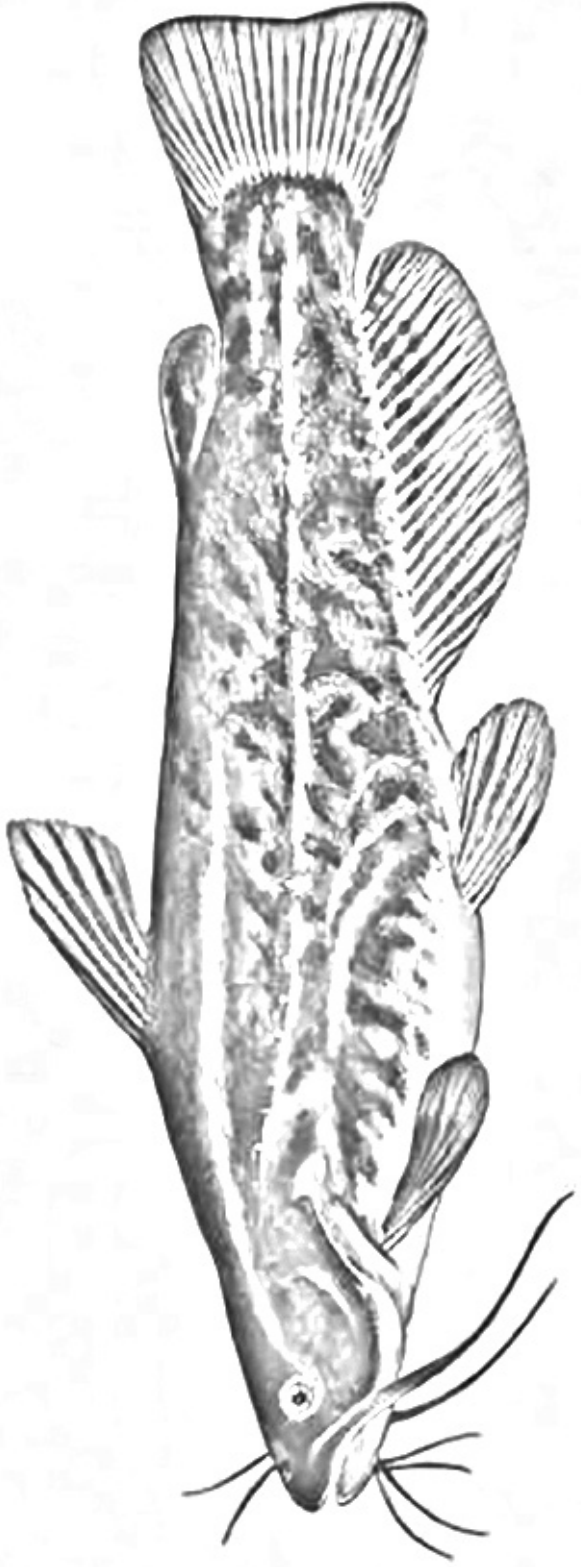
Brown bullheads thrive in a variety of habitats, including lakes, ponds, and slow moving streams with low oxygen and/or muddy conditions.

Tips to Catch

Just like black bullhead, be sure to keep it simple, staying close to the bottom and using a small sinker to carry your bait down. Light tackle is less likely to spook wary fish, and all bullheads you catch will fight. Wait 3 seconds before setting the hook -- Bullheads tend to hold the bait, letting the angler reel them in, and then spitting the bait out at the last second. Fishing at night is also highly successful due to their nocturnal habits.

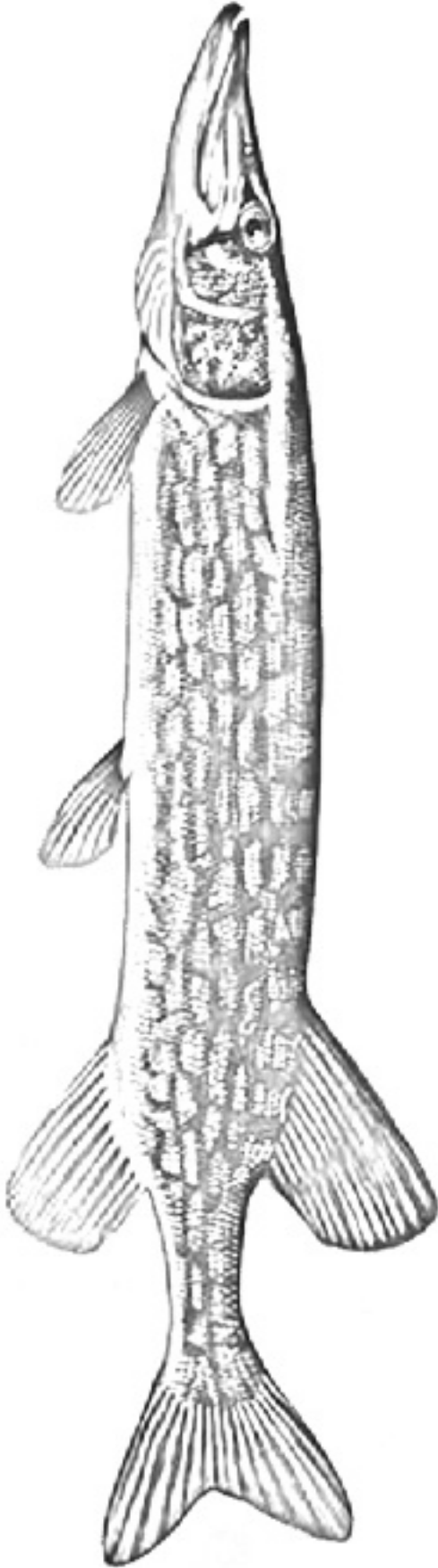


Easy to Catch



Brown Bullhead

Chain Pickerel

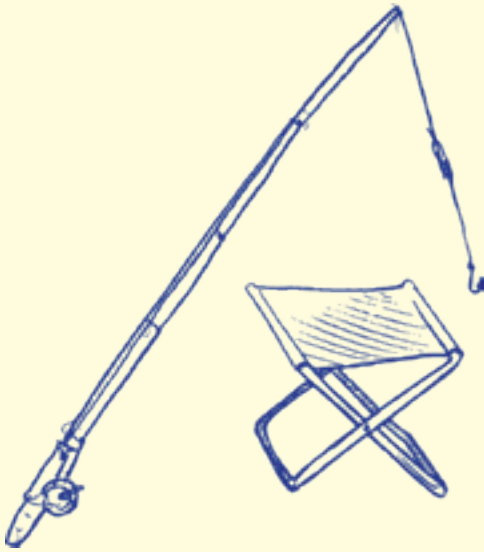


Chain Pickerel

Esox niger

Description

The chain pickerel is a popular pike sport fish, and it is an energetic fighter when hooked. It is an aggressive eater, and will attack anything with a shine or flash. They are a good meal for anglers that can catch them, however, they have lots of small bones that make cleaning the fish difficult.



Region

Its range is along the eastern coast of North America from southern Canada to Florida, and west to Texas. On the Atlantic Coast, in Maine, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia, the chain pickerel extend as far as 46°N. The fish inhabits fresh water from the Mississippi Valley into southern Wisconsin. It also is commonly found in Lake Michigan and the lower portion of the Great Lakes.

Habitat

Chain Pickerel prefer warmer waters, and are found in clear, weedy lakes, ponds and reservoirs and in slow-moving reaches of warm-water streams. They are found most often in water less than 10 ft deep.

Key Indication Marks

The chain pickerel has a distinctive, dark, chain-like pattern on its greenish sides. The opercles and cheeks of the fish are entirely scaled. The average size for chain pickerel is 24" and 3 lbs, however, it may reach up to 30" long on rare occasions.

Tips to Catch

Practically any bass lure can be effective for pickerel, although like most pike, they seem to be particularly susceptible to flashy lures which imitate small forage fish. Dragging a plastic worm, lizard, frog, or other soft imitation can also be extremely effective. A steel leader is necessary for sharp-toothed and active fish at two to three pounds.

Lures to Use

Live minnows, spinnerbaits, spoons, plugs, and flies.



Not so Easy to Catch

Channel Catfish

Ictalurus punctatus

Description

The channel catfish is North America's most numerous catfish species. It is the official fish of Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, and Tennessee, and is informally referred to as a "channel cat". They are the most fished for catfish species, with approximately 8 million anglers targeting them per year. Channel cats are cavity nesters, meaning they lay their eggs in crevices, hollows, or debris, to protect them from swift currents. Since they are bottom-feeders, they have taste buds distributed over the surface of their entire bodies. This combination of senses of taste and smell allows the channel catfish to find food in dark, stained, or muddy water. Channel catfish have a top-end size of about 40–50 pounds. Realistically, a channel catfish over 20 lb is considered a marvelous specimen, and most catfish anglers consider a 10 lb catch to be admirable.

Key Indication Marks

Channel catfish have a deeply forked tail and their upper jaw is longer than the lower jaw. The body can be blue, gray, silver, or almost black. Their belly is usually white or cream colored, with a curved anal fin, containing between 24 and 30 rays. The channel catfish with few to no spots is sometimes mistaken with a blue catfish, but the blue catfish has an anal fin with a straight edge and more than 30 rays.

Lures to Use

Nightcrawlers, leeches, chicken blood, chicken liver, chicken or fish guts, crawdads, grasshoppers, water dogs, live and lifeless minnows, cut bait, and a multitude of prepared "stink" baits.

Region

Native to the Nearctic, being well distributed in lower Canada and the eastern and northern United States, as well as parts of northern Mexico.

Habitat

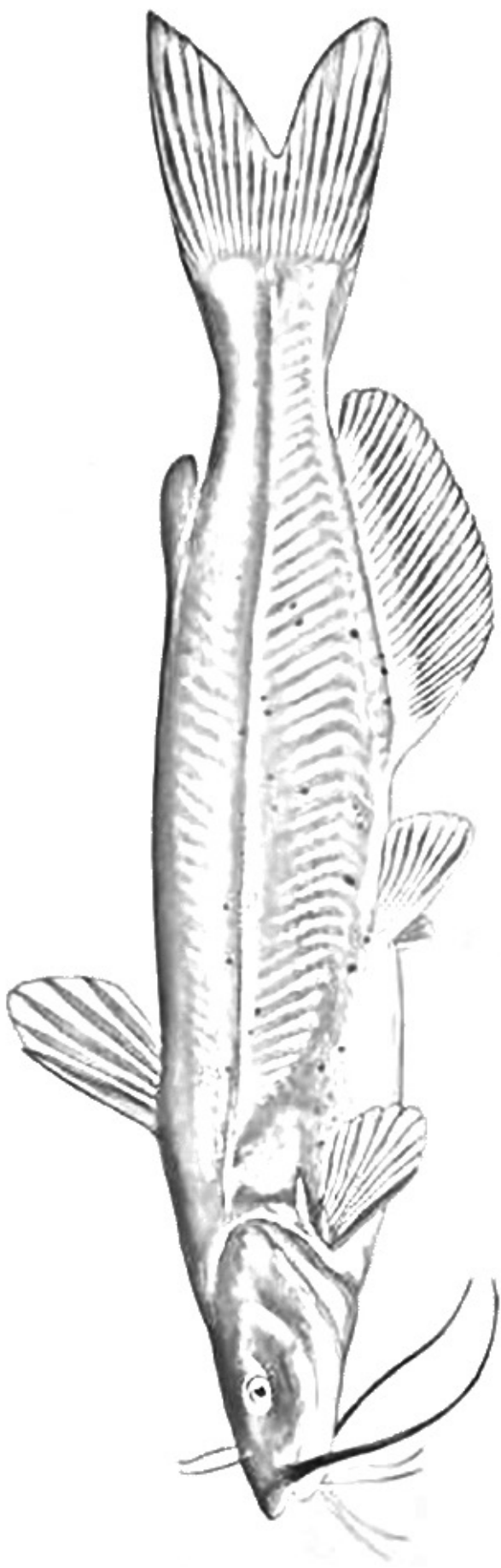
They thrive in small and large rivers, reservoirs, natural lakes, and ponds.

Tips to Catch

The color of the line used does not matter, as catfish are not line-shy. Ten to twelve pound test fishing line works just fine, but the weight of your bait needs to be as light as possible. Once you feel a bite, set the hook immediately. Unlike bullheads, channel catfish have very small, shy bites, and will release if met with resistance.

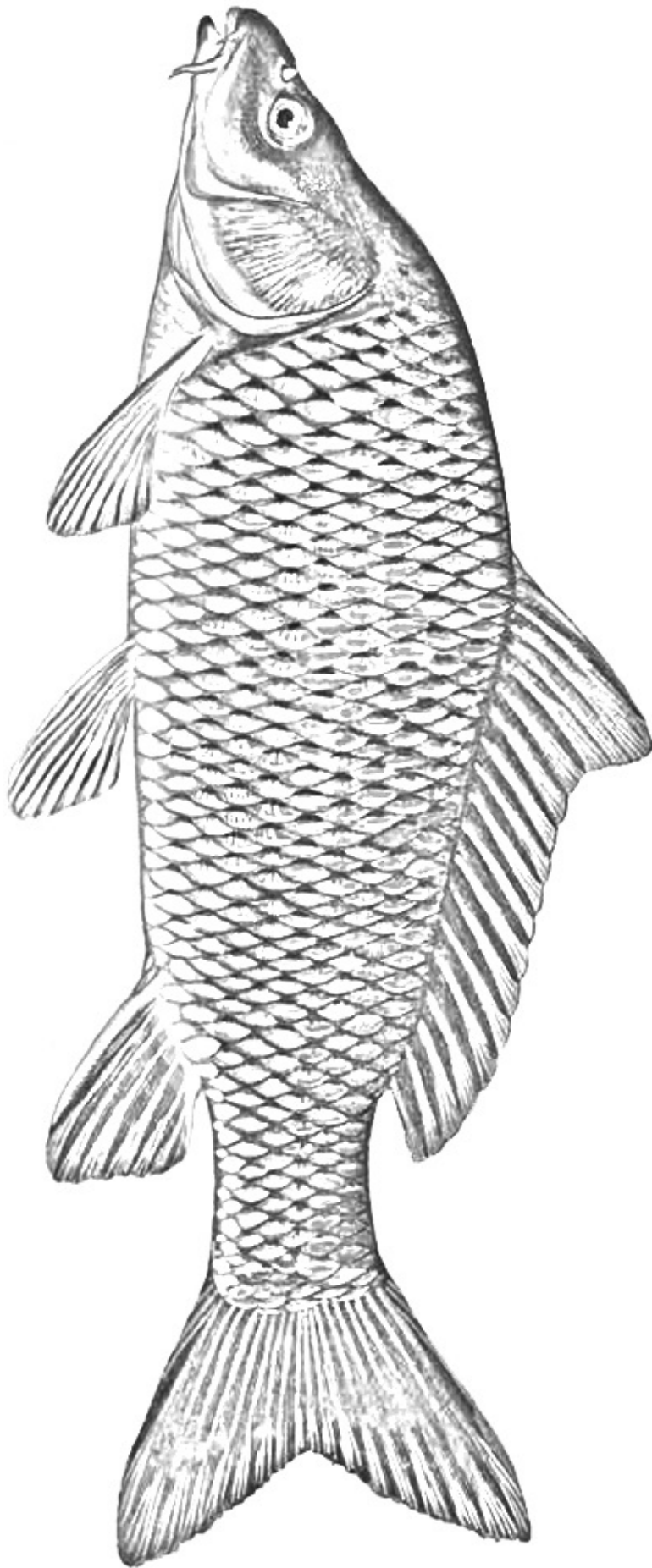


Easy to Catch



Channel Catfish

Common Carp



Common Carp

Cyprinus carpio

Description

As schooling fish, common carp prefer to be in groups of five or more. They easily survive winter in a frozen-over pond, as long as some free water remains below the ice. Carp are able to tolerate water with very low oxygen levels, by gulping air at the surface. Because they survive rough conditions, they are often considered a destructive invasive species in many countries. Koi fish are a specially-bred variety of common carp.



Key Indication Marks

The Common Carp has a variety of colors and shapes, but its scales are always large and thick. Wild carp usually have elongated bodies that are brownish-green to golden yellow with darker colored fins. Their mouths are pointed downward with thick lips.

Lures to Use

Carp eat a large number of different foods, so your lure and bait choices are not limited. They have been known to go for insects, aquatic worms, crustaceans, and mollusks, but they also consume algae and other plants. You can also try corn, cherry tomatoes, carp bait, and nightcrawlers.

Region

The common carp is native to Eastern Europe and much of Asia, in addition to every state in the United States besides Alaska.

Habitat

Carp prefer large bodies of slow or standing water and soft, vegetative sediments.

Tips to Catch

Try using a black matte hook. If using corn or other colorful baits, a different colored hook is fine, but try to avoid bright or shiny hooks or line if you are fishing in murky water. Carp are known for gently striking a few times before actually taking a bite. Let them go at your bait a few times before trying to set a hook.



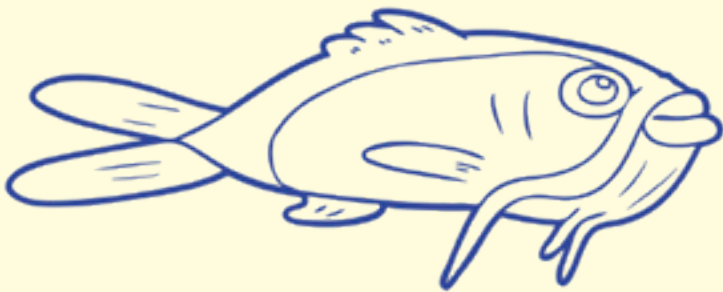
Not so Easy to Catch

Flathead Catfish

Pylodictis olivaris

Description

Flatheads grow to a length of 61 inches and may weigh up to 123 lbs, making it the second-largest North American catfish, second to the blue catfish.



Key Indication Marks

Flathead catfish are typically pale yellow to light brown on the back and sides, and highly mottled with black and/or brown. The belly is usually pale yellow or cream colored. The head is broadly flattened, with a projecting lower jaw. Young fish may be very dark, almost black in appearance.

Lures to Use

Small carp, buffalo fish and even small bullhead catfish. Crawfish and nightcrawlers also work well.

Region

Ranging from the lower Great Lakes region to northern Mexico. They have been widely introduced and are an invasive species in some areas.

Habitat

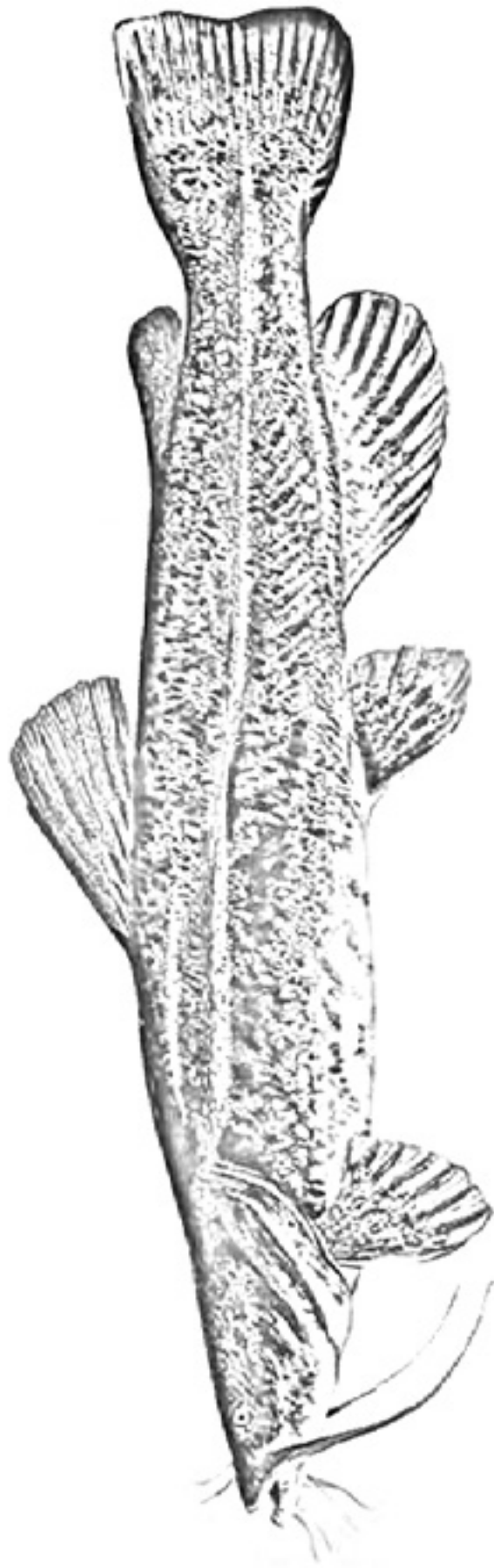
These catfish prefer deep pools of cloudy water with slow currents in rivers, canals and lakes. Flatheads cannot live in full-strength seawater (which is about 35 parts/thousand or about 35 grams/liter of water), but they can survive 10 ppt for a while and thrive in water up to about 5 ppt.

Tips to Catch

When a flathead grows to a length of 24" or more, it no longer scavenges for its food. They begin lurking within log jams, brush piles and other dense cover as they wait to ambush passing fish. Unlike channel catfish, flatheads rarely go after livers, stinkbaits, and other non-living options. Try small live fish, such as bluegills and green sunfish. You can ask the bait shops in the area what seems to be getting the flatheads' attention.

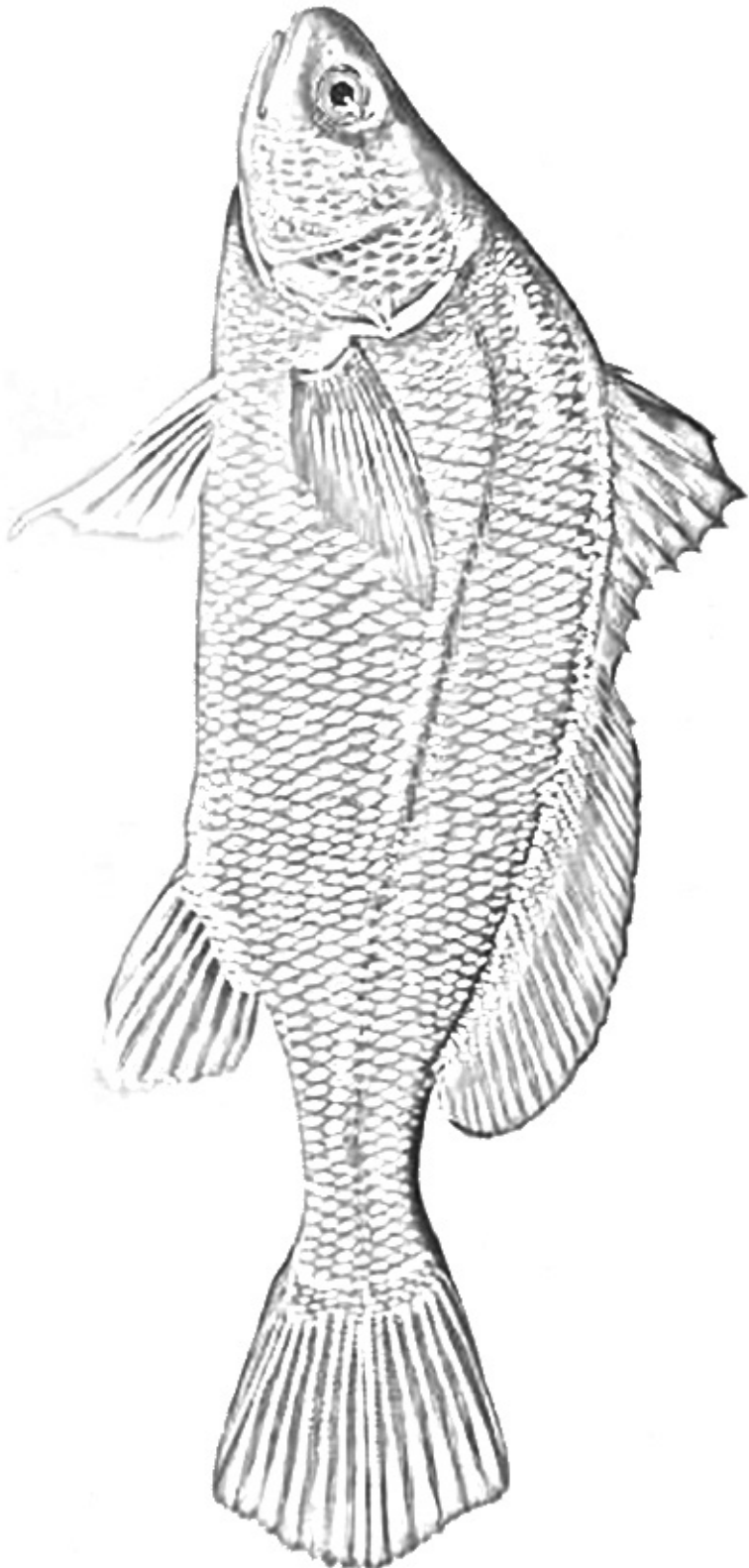


Easy to Catch



Flathead Catfish

Freshwater Drum



Freshwater Drum

Aplodinotus grunniens

Description

Mature freshwater drum are known for the noises that the mature males make during breeding season. They emit a grunting sound, made by a special set of muscles within the body cavity that vibrate against the swim bladder. Females lay eggs that then float on the water surface until they hatch, sometimes traveling for miles on rivers or windswept lakes before hatching. Freshwater drum typically weighs 5-15 lb, however, the world record weighed in at 54 lb 8 oz. While they are not as popular to fish for as catfish, bass, or trout, Drum make a fine whitefish meal.

Key Indication Marks

The freshwater drum is gray or silvery in turbid waters and more bronze or brown colored in clearer waters. It is a deep bodied fish with a divided dorsal fin consisting of 10 spines and 29-32 rays.

Region

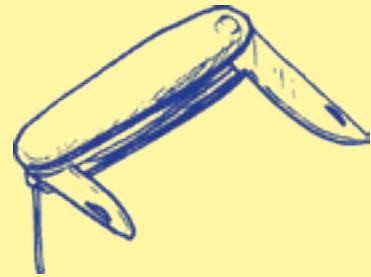
Freshwater drum are the only North American member of their family to exclusively inhabit freshwater. They are considered to be one of the most wide-ranging species in North America.

Habitat

They prefer clear water, but they are tolerant of turbid and murky water. They prefer the bottom to be clean sand and gravel substrates.

Tips to Catch

Drum are known to bite at any time of day, in any weather, and with any method.



Lures to Use

Insects, mussels, crayfish and small fishes work as live bait. Spinners, spoons and crankbaits, jigs, bladebaits and jerkbaits all work as lures. Night crawlers may also be the best bait to use.



Easy to Catch

Green Sunfish

Lepomis cyanellus

Description

The green sunfish, a panfish popular with anglers, is said to have polarization sensitive vision not found in humans and other vertebrates, which helps in enhancement of visibility of target objects in scattering media, using a method called polarization difference imaging. They are considered an invasive species in the State of Florida and New Jersey. In New Jersey anglers must destroy them, and not release them. However, they are sometimes kept in aquariums by people who hold licenses to own them.



Key Indication Marks

The green sunfish is blue-green in color on its back and sides with yellow-flecked bony-ridged scales, as well as yellow coloration on the ventral sides. They also have a dark spot located near the back end of the dorsal fin. Typical length ranges from about 3-7 inches, and they usually weigh less than a pound.

Lures to Use

Live bait such as nightcrawlers, waxworms, and mealworms. Grocery store baits such as pieces of hot dog or corn kernels can also work. Small lures have been known to occasionally catch green sunfish. They can be caught with fly fishing tackle.

Region

Native to a wide area of North America east of the Rocky Mountains, from the Hudson Bay basin in Canada, to the Gulf Coast in the United States, and northern Mexico.

Habitat

The species prefers areas in sluggish backwaters, lakes, and ponds with gravel, sand, or bedrock bottoms. Green sunfish tend to spend their time hiding around rocks, submerged logs, and other objects that provide cover and protection.

Tips to Catch

Use simple, light tackle. Fish during the day, around shallow water with cover. You can also try drifting the bait through the water with a boat. The hook should be suspended around 10 to 15 feet down into the water.

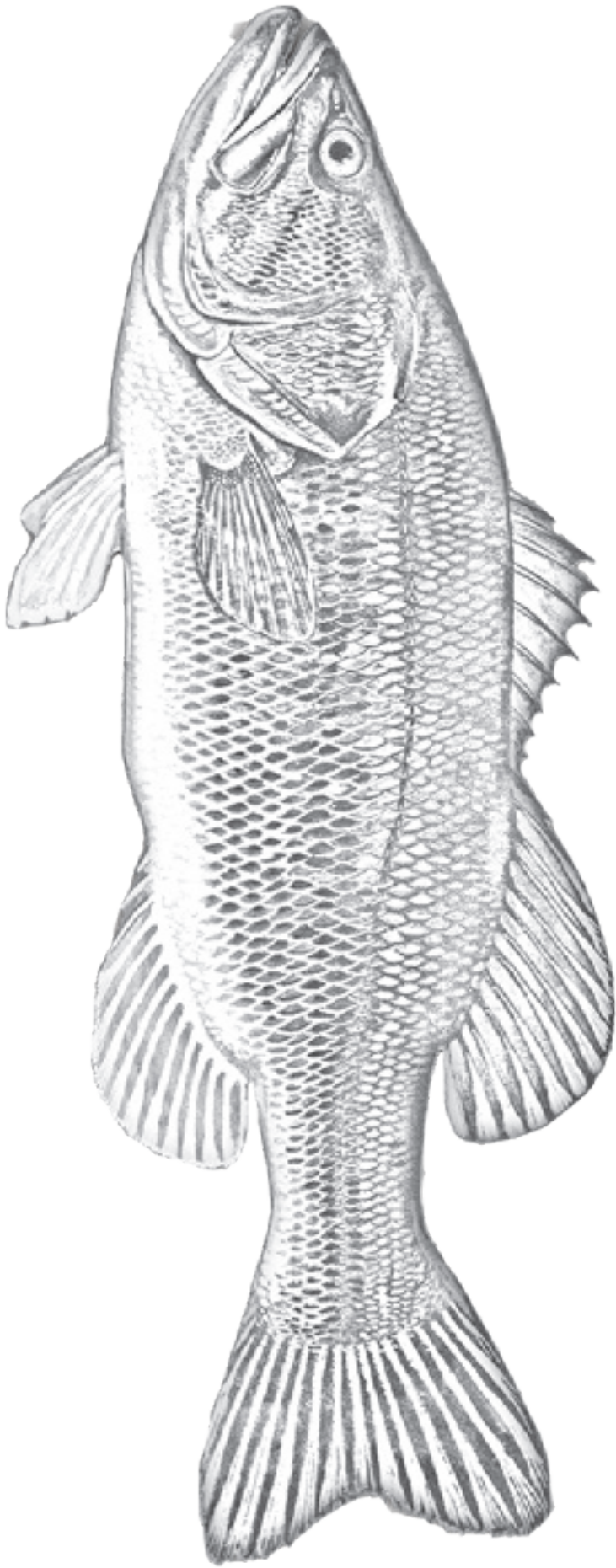


Hard to Catch



Green Sunfish

Largemouth Bass



Largemouth Bass

Micropterus salmoides

Description

Unlike most bass, Largemouth bass are actually part of the sunfish family, *Centrarchidae*. While they were originally localized to the eastern half of the United States, they became incredibly popular due to how easy they are to catch, and they are now distributed widely throughout the country.



Key Indication Marks

Prominent lateral stripe may be seen running from the snout through the eye to the base of the tail. Towards the tail, there is a series of blotches of varying size. These blotches evolve into a solid, even stripe on the caudal peduncle. The eye is golden brown.

Lures to Use

Texas-rigged Soft baits, Weedless Jigs, Jigworms, Spinnerbaits, and Crankbaits.

Region

Eastern United States

Habitat

All water types, including swamps, lakes, ponds, rivers, and estuaries. They prefer warm, clear waters with weeds to hide in.

Tips to Catch

When your plastic worms get torn up, save them. Bass like to ambush wounded prey, so a beat-up worm is perfect to use, especially in shallow water. In shallow cover (wood, stumps, clumps of grass) use a spinner bait with a red or pink head, and a crank bait with red hooks. The red makes the fish think the bait's injured, and they'll bite at it. Skip your bait across the top of the water. Bass position themselves in cover, and like the lure presented to them at different angles - keep tapping at it to upset it into biting your hook.



Easy to Catch

Paddlefish

Polyodontidae

Description

The Paddlefish is a protected species in many states. They have been overfished, polluted, and overrun by the human population. Before setting out to fish for one, make sure they are not on the list of protected species in your state. Paddlefish are a filter feeding species, so hooking one is difficult and should only be for experienced anglers.

Key Indication Marks

They have a shark-like body, average 4.9 ft in length, weigh 60 lb, and can live in excess of thirty years. Paddlefish are smooth-skinned and almost entirely cartilaginous. Their eyes are small and directed laterally. They have a large, tapering operculum flap, a large mouth, and a flat, paddle-shaped rostrum that measures approximately one-third of their body length. As well as electroreceptors on the rostrum, American paddlefish have sensory pores covering nearly half of the skin surface extending from the rostrum to the top of the head down to the tips of the operculum flaps.

Lures to Use

You will need snagging gear, such as a stiff, 6- to 7-foot rod equipped with a level-wind saltwater reel spooled with 100-pound test (or heavier) braided line, 8- to 16-ounce sinkers, plenty of No. 8 to No. 14 treble hooks, and leather gloves.

Region

American paddlefish are native to the Mississippi River basin from New York to Montana and south to the Gulf of Mexico. However, their populations have been on a deep decline due to overfishing, overpopulation, and the encroachment of human development on their breeding grounds.

Habitat

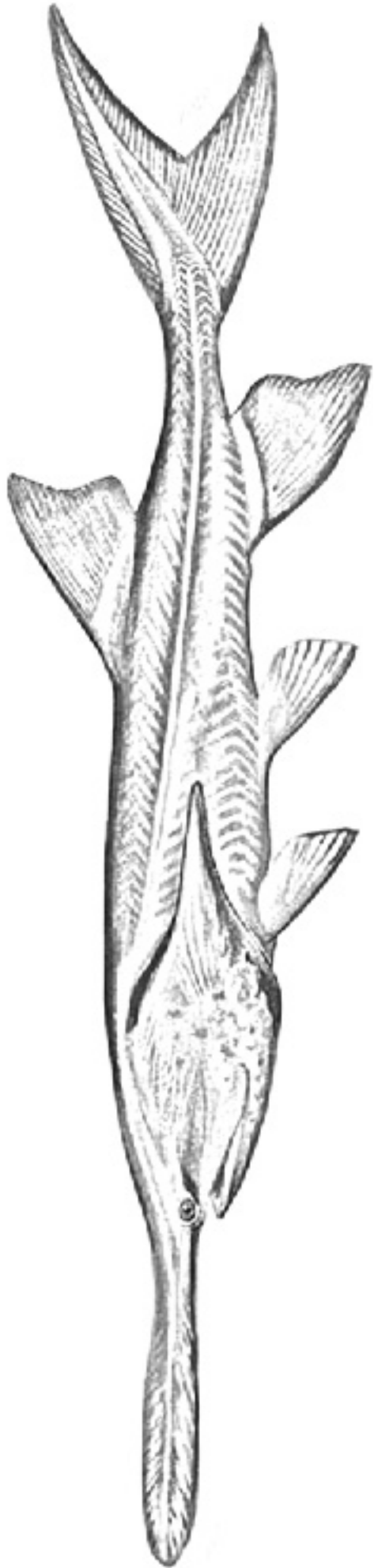
They occur most frequently in deeper, low current areas such as side channels, oxbows, backwater lakes, bayous, and tailwaters below dams. They can be found amongst rocks, dams, and waterfalls.

Tips to Catch

Be sure to check the legality of fishing for paddlefish in your state. Some states do not allow fishing for paddlefish from boats, and you must fish from the bank, if at all.

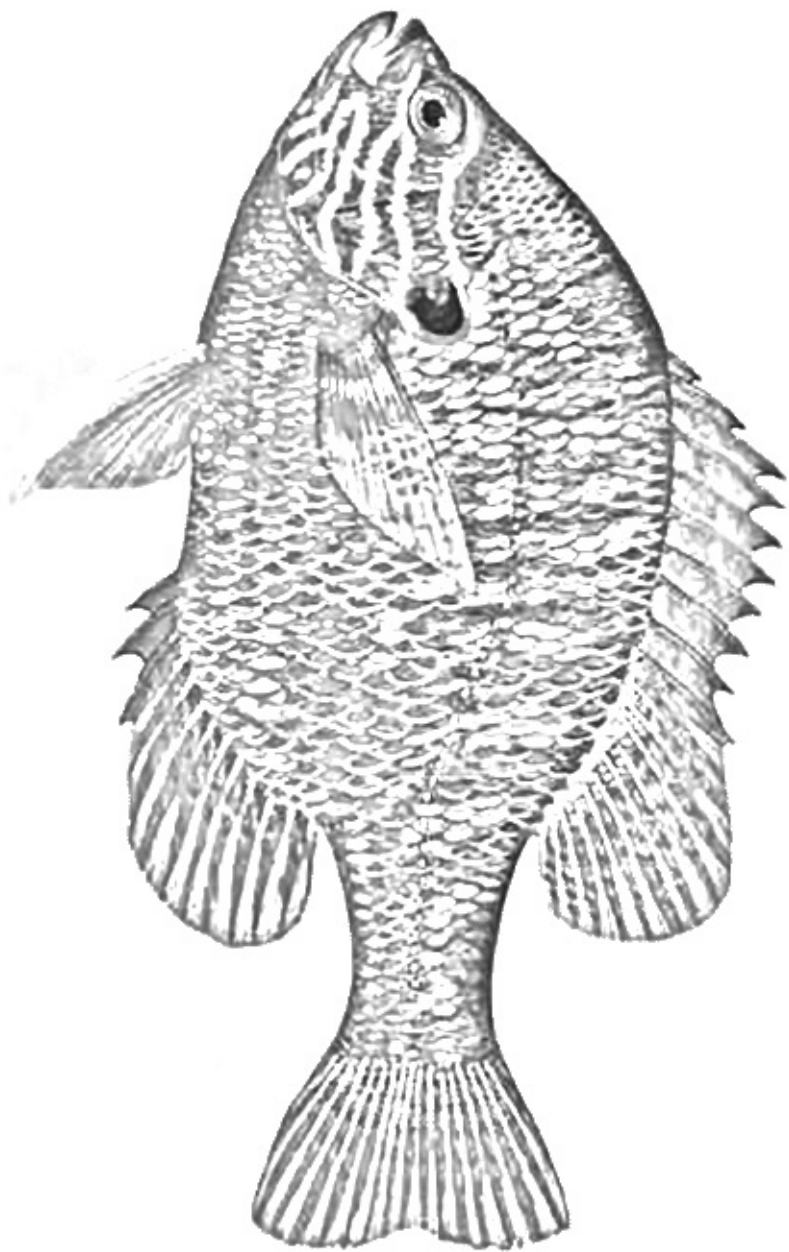


Hard to Catch



Paddlefish

Pumpkinseed Sunfish



Pumpkinseed Sunfish

Lepomis gibbosus

Description

Pumpkinseed fish are a tasty panfish that many anglers catch with worms or other small live baits. Due to their small size, it would take several fish to feed an appetite of a grown human, but their meat is still sought after. They sometimes show a preference for a home range and will remain close to particular areas of a pond or lake. Even when fish are captured and released into a different part of a pond or lake, a significant percentage of them will return to their original location.



Key Indication Marks

Orange, green, yellow or blue in color, with speckles over their sides and back and a yellow-orange breast and belly. The coloration of the ctenoid scales of the pumpkinseed is one of the most vibrant of any freshwater fish and can range from an olive-green or brown to bright orange and blue. The pumpkinseed is noted for the orange-red spot on the margin of its black gill cover. Adults average around 5-8 inches and are less than half a pound.

Lures to Use

Flies, insects, minnows, or jigs.

Region

Can be found from Washington and Oregon on the Pacific Coast to Georgia on the Atlantic Coast. Yet they are primarily found in the northeastern United States and more rarely in the south-central or southwestern region of the continent. In Europe, the pumpkinseed is considered an invasive species.

Habitat

Warm, calm lakes, ponds, and pools of creeks and small rivers with plenty of vegetation. They prefer clear water where they can find shelter to hide.

Tips to Catch

Sunfish normally take small bites off the bait, so thread the worm on the hook until the hook is completely covered, or use just a piece of the worm. Fly fishing, drift fishing, and still fishing all work well with Pumpkinseeds.



Easy to Catch

Redbreast Sunfish

Lepomis auritus

Description

Commonly mistaken for a bluegill, redbreast sunfish are popular with anglers. They are also kept as an aquarium fish by hobbyists. Their meat is commonly dipped in batter and fried. They bite at almost anything, so they are commonly caught, along with bluegill and catfish.



Key Indication Marks

The redbreast's body is a bluish-green that fades into a bright orange-yellow belly in females, and a deep orange-red belly in males. Both males and females have vertical rows of red-brown to orange spots on the sides of the body. The operculum, or gill cover, has a distinguishing long black lobe. In adults, the lobe often reaches a length of one inch or more; it is narrow and usually not wider than the eye.

Lures to Use

Live bait, such as nightcrawlers, crickets, grasshoppers, waxworms, or mealworms. Small lures or flies also work.

Region

The species native range is condensed to eastern North America, in Canada and south to the rivers emptying into the Atlantic Ocean. The species has been introduced as far west as Texas.

Habitat

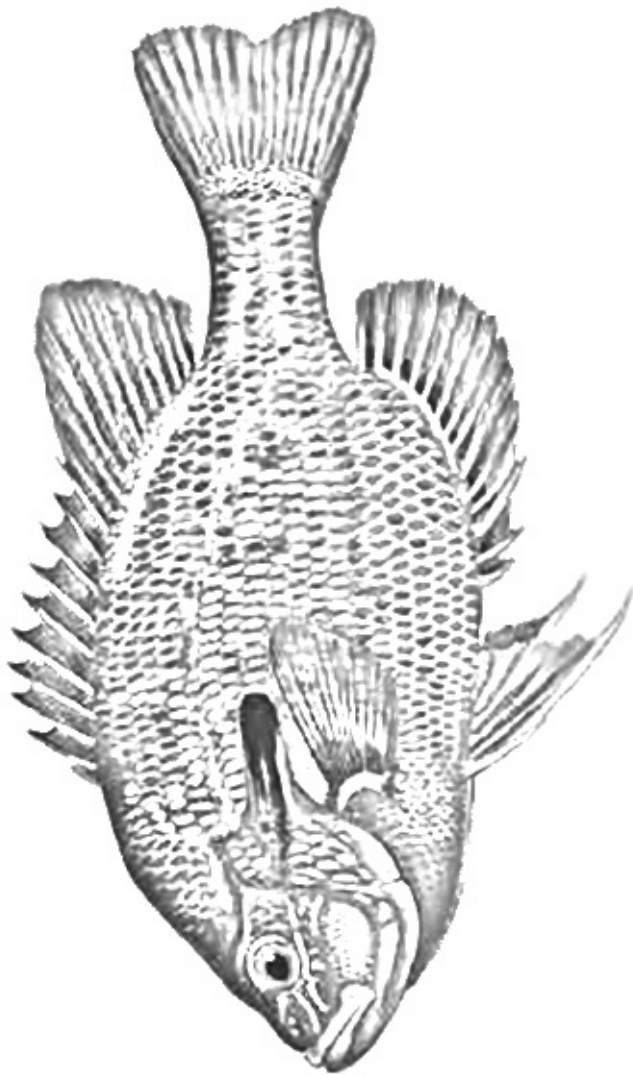
The redbreast thrives in streams and rivers with shelter and structure, usually around banks with the water pH around 7.0-7.5. It tends to be more of a cool-river species, but also inhabits freshwater lakes and streams. They prefer areas with slow-moving or sluggish water.

Tips to Catch

Redbreast is popular with fly anglers in the winter because it will more readily strike a moving fly than will bluegills in cooler water. They will attack surface lures without hesitation.

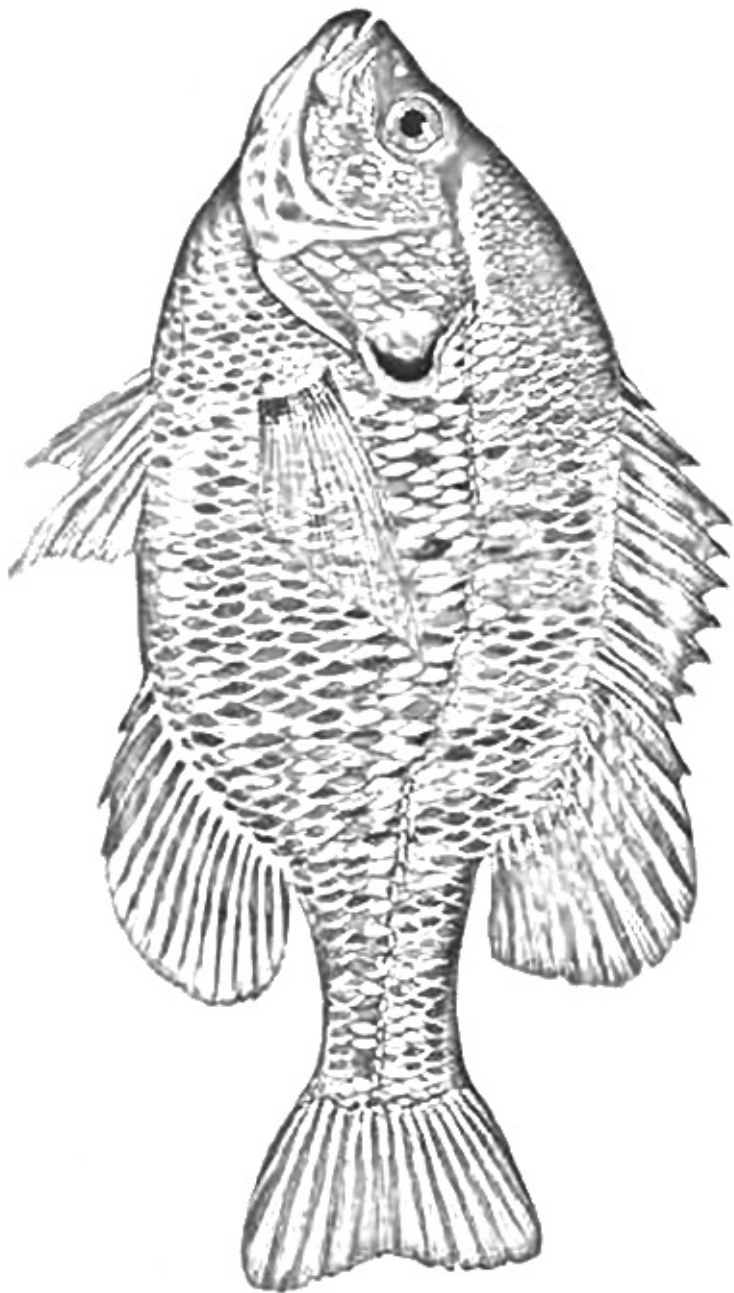


Easy to Catch



Redbreast Sunfish

Redear Sunfish

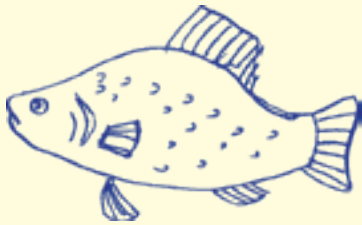


Redear Sunfish

Lepomis microlophus

Description

Redear are a unique sunfish, as they are known for their peculiar diet of snails and mollusks. Because of this, they are nicknamed the "shellcracker". Because of their strong jaws, redear sunfish likely decrease food availability for pumpkinseeds and other sunfish, as they are able to access the food sources more easily. They are called redear due to the red or orange colored border on their ear flap.



Key Indication Marks

Redear sunfish generally resembles the bluegill, except for its coloration and somewhat larger size. The redear sunfish also has faint vertical bars traveling downwards from its dorsal. At full length, adults are typically 8-10" long, but they can reach up to 15". Typical weight for adults is one pound or less.

Lures to Use

Live bait, such as nightcrawlers, crickets, grasshoppers, waxworms, or mealworms. Small lures or flies also work.

Region

Redear sunfish are native to North Carolina and Florida, west to southern Illinois and southern Missouri, and south to the Rio Grande drainage in Texas. Redear is a popular sport fish, and has been introduced to bodies of water all over North America.

Habitat

The redear sunfish inhabits warm, quiet waters of lakes, ponds, streams, and reservoirs. They prefer to be near logs and vegetation, and tend to congregate in groups around these features.

Tips to Catch

Redear are more difficult to hook than most other sunfish, as they aren't attracted to artificial lures, but easily take live baits like earthworms, crickets, grass shrimp, and their favorites, snails and mollusks..



Easy to Catch

Sauger

Sander canadensis

Description

Sauger are a migratory species that tend to lurk in water deeper than 4.5 feet. They closely resemble their relative, the walleye, and in some situations, they produce hybrids referred to as "saugeyes", which exhibit traits of both species.

Region

The historical range consisted of eastern U.S west of the Appalachian Mountains, mostly southern, central, and western U.S up into southern Canada. However, Sauger distribution and range has decreased from historical ranges because of degraded and fragmented habitat conditions. They are a migratory fish, so their location depends on the time of year.

Habitat

Sauger are most likely to be found in large rivers with deep pools with depths greater than 2 feet. They encounter a variety of habitats because of their migratory tendencies. They are usually found in natural rivers because they have more abundant pools and their flow regime has not been altered by dams or diversions. They typically thrive in areas with high turbidity, low channel slope, low stream velocity, and deep water.

Key Indication Marks

Saugers obtain two dorsal fins, the first is spiny and the posterior dorsal fin is a soft-rayed fin. They have a fusiform body structure, and as a result saugers are well adapted predatory fishes and are capable of swimming into fast currents with minimal drag on their bodies. They are distinguished from the walleye by having at least 3 rows of rounded black spots in the 1st dorsal fin, and 3-4 dark brown saddles on the back with 2 large dark brown blotches on the side.

Tips to Catch

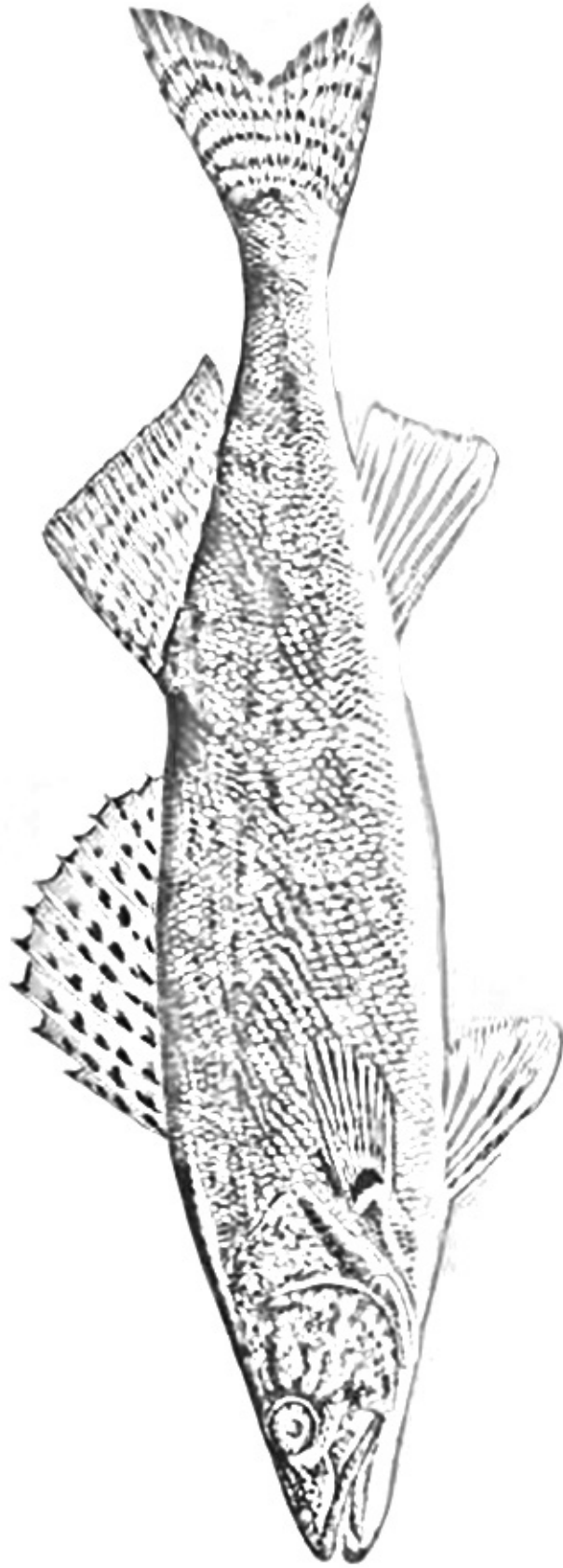
Saugers have been known to concentrate near shore along rip rap, trees, and other woody debris. Trolling or casting on deep gravel bars has been proven successful. Bottom bouncing weights or pencil weights ($\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce) can be used below jigs (jig and hook only) to keep them just off the bottom.

Lures to Use

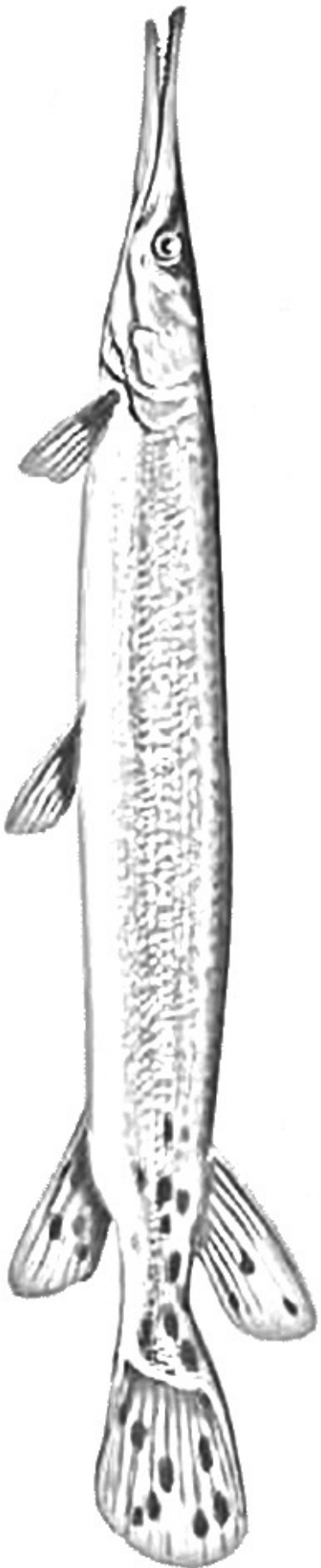
Fly lures, floating minnow lures, or Walleye Willospoons.



Easy to Catch



Saugey



Shortnose Gar

Shortnose Gar

Lepisosteus platostomus

Description

The shortnose gar is an ambush predator, feeding mostly on fish, but also consuming crustaceans, insects, and other invertebrates. Like many other "lie-in-wait" predators, they have an elongated, torpedo-like body with an elongated head containing one row of sharp, conical teeth. Additionally, gar have the ability to survive in environments with very little oxygen and especially turbid conditions because of their specialized gas bladder.



Key Indication Marks

Gar are long, slender fish, brown or olive green above and whitish below. They typically grow to about 24" in length.

Lures to Use

Cut bait, minnows, flies, spinner baits, and spoons



Region

Shortnose gar today are only located in North America. Located mainly in the central United States, they occupy much of the Mississippi and Missouri River basins ranging from Montana to the Ohio River, the Gulf Coast from Louisiana and Alabama to parts of Texas in the south.

Habitat

Gar inhabit calm waters in large rivers and their backwaters, as well as oxbow lakes and large pools. Shortnosed gar are known to withstand higher turbidity than other types of gar, and they are common in calm backwater of rivers and lakes.

Tips to Catch

Wait for the gar to take the bite and then swallow the bait, and then begin a second run before setting the hook. Gar tend to swim close to the surface, so they are easy to spot. It is believed that their eyesight isn't the best, so aim for a few feet in front of them.



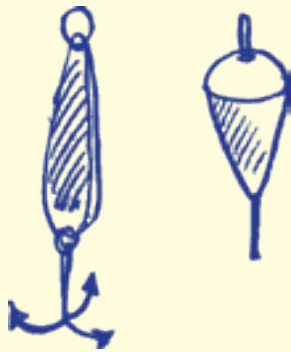
Easy to Catch

Smallmouth Bass

Micropterus dolomieu

Description

Native to North America, the smallmouth bass is a popular game fish sought after by many anglers. Known for the fight it gives when getting reeled in, it is considered one of the sportiest freshwater fish. Like largemouth, smallmouth bass are a part of the sunfish family.



Key Indication Marks

A smallmouth bass has an elongated body and is brownish-green in color, fading to a yellow-white underside. Its sides are covered with dark brown vertical lines while its head has dark brown horizontal streaks.

Lures to Use

The most common lures used for smallmouth bass fishing include plastic worms, jigs, crankbaits, spinnerbaits, grubs, and spoons. Good baits also include nightcrawlers, minnows, small shad or crayfish.

Region

Found in the St. Lawrence/Great Lakes system, Hudson Bay, and Mississippi River basins from southern Quebec in Canada to North Dakota and south to northern Alabama and eastern Oklahoma.

Habitat

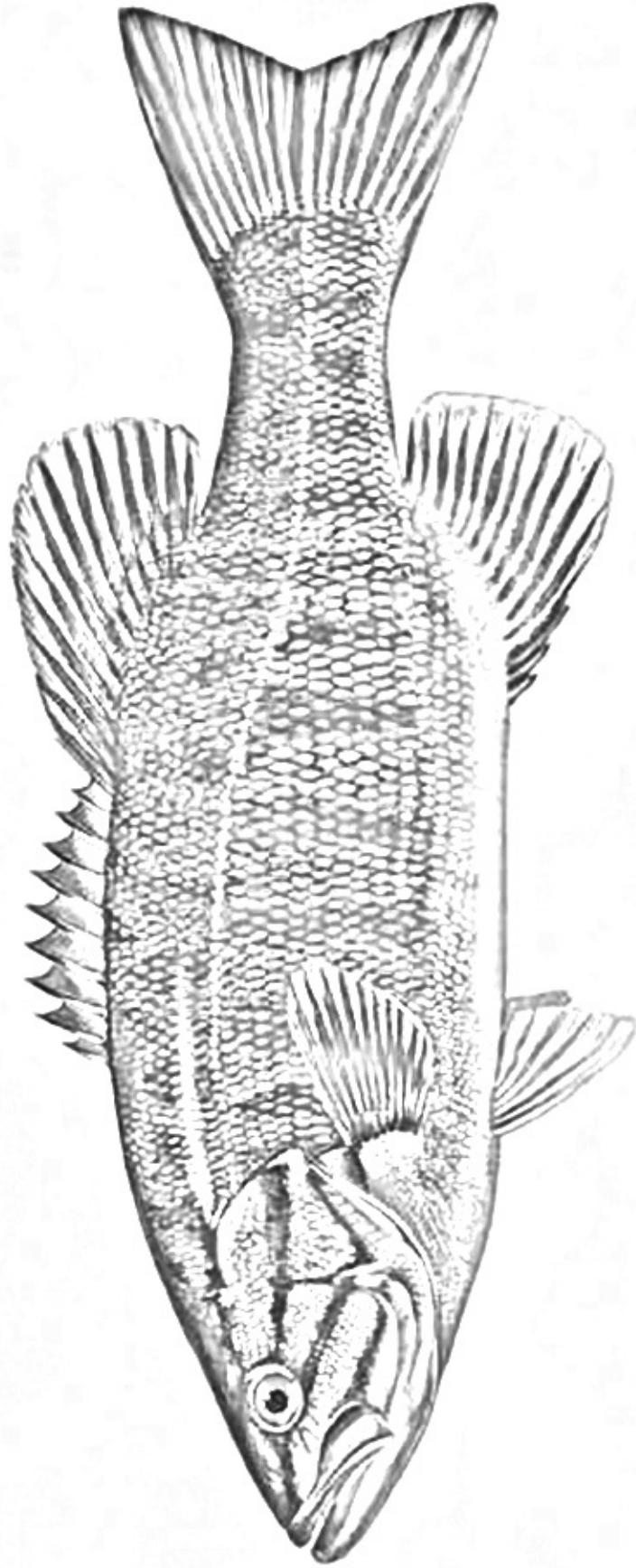
Smallmouth bass prefer to live in clear, calm water with rocky bottoms and places to hide. They will hide in deep water between rocks, among water vegetation, or under roots and limbs of sunken trees. They enjoy shady conditions with the water temperature between 66°F and 72°F. They can live in rivers, lakes, streams, or reservoirs.

Tips to Catch

Smallmouth bass are known for being tough fighters when reeling them in. Never give up! Big smallmouth are lazier than smaller ones and like to be where they can get an easy meal. For this reason they will hang out in spots where the current will push food in their direction, allowing them to just hang out and wait. Wind triggers feeding time for the smallmouth. For the same reason that bass will congregate in areas where the water is moving, bass will also feed more where the wind is blowing.

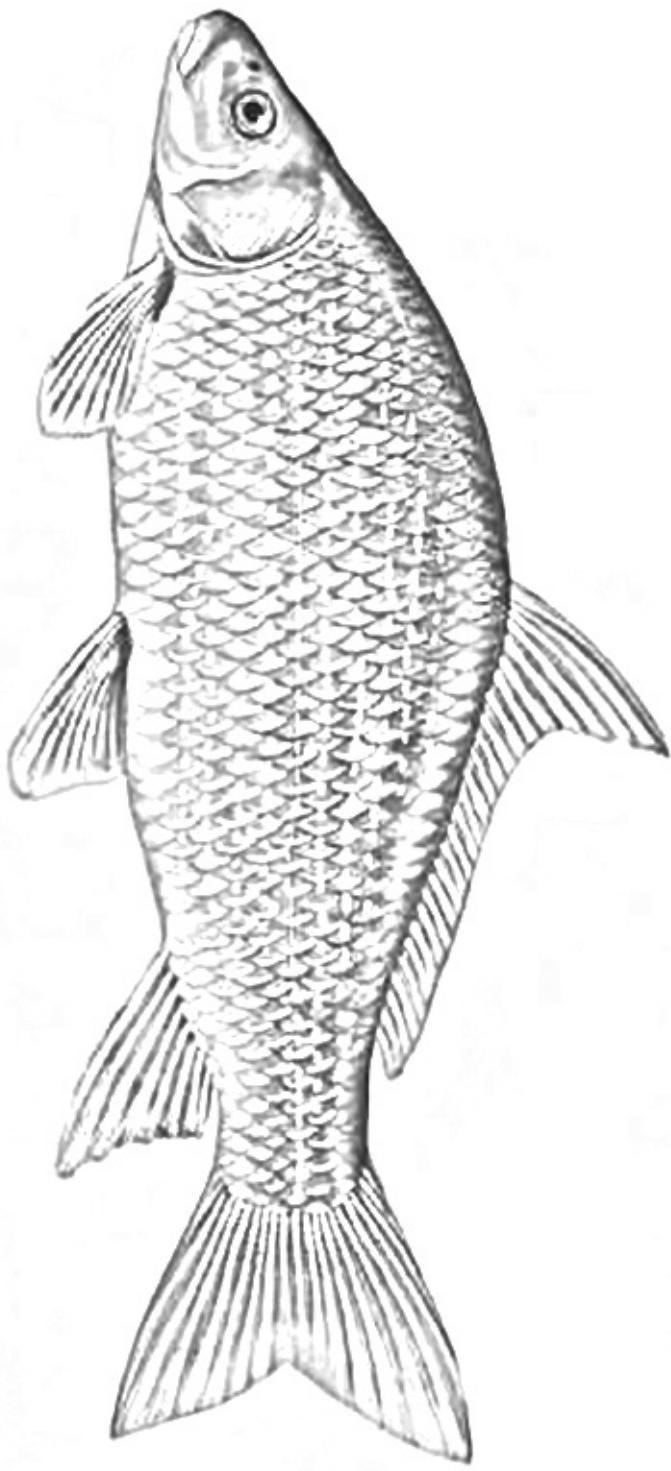


Easy to Catch



Smallmouth Bass

Smallmouth Buffalo



Smallmouth Buffalo

Ictiobus Bubalus

Description

Although considered by many to be a rough fish, smallmouth buffalo is the most common commercially sold freshwater fish in the United States. The species is highly valued by some as a human food source and the fish meal is common in animal feed. They are relatively quick and easy to raise in commercial farm ponds.



Key Indication Marks

The coloration of smallmouth buffalo ranges from shades of gray to brown and coppery green dorsally and pale yellow to white ventrally. Fin colors match the portion of the body where they attach and are generally darker towards the tips. They are characteristically stocky, having a hump that rises up from the operculum. Pectoral fins protrude ventrally like the anal fins. The caudal fin has even lobes. And the dorsal fin protrudes from the top of the hump to a blunt point, then shortens and runs the remaining length of the body to the base of the tail. Typical adults reach a length around 16-24" with some specimens reaching as much as 35".

Lures to Use

Doughballs and corn on hooks

Region

Smallmouth Buffalo can be found in the major tributaries and surrounding waters of the Mississippi River in the United States, as well as some other water systems where it has been introduced.

Habitat

The smallmouth buffalo is a hardy fish that frequents clear, moderate to fast-moving streams, but has been occasionally known in some lakes and ponds. It prefers waters with dense aquatic vegetation and a silty bottom. It has a high tolerance for hard water and can survive in waters with pH ranges of 6.5-8.5.

Tips to Catch

Crawlers work better in early Spring and late Fall, but floating vegetation or bread dough also yield good results.



Easy to Catch

Spotted Gar

Lepisosteus Oculatus

Description

The spotted gar is a voracious predator. Its sharp-toothed beak is very effective at catching fast moving prey. A diet study of the spotted gar reported their diet consists of four species of fish; golden topminnow, warmouth, bluegill, and spotted sunfish, which adds to 18.1% of total food volume in the stomach, while 57.5% of the stomach content was shrimp. Other invertebrates filled the remaining 23.6% of the stomach. Gar are also known to eat insect larvae and algae.

Key Indication Marks

Spotted gar are a freshwater fish native to North America that has an abundance of dark spots on its head, fins, and dart-like body. They have an elongated mouth with many needle-like teeth to catch other fish and crustaceans. It is one of the smallest of the seven species of gar found in North America, growing 2-3 ft in length and weighing 4-6 pounds on average. Gars have diamond-shaped, thick, enamel (ganoid) scales. The name *Lepisosteus* is Greek for "bony scale."

Lures to Use

25lb+ line is recommended for a moderate size spotted gar with an additional few feet of steel leader to protect against their sharp teeth. Topwater plugs are popular for spectacle when catching the fish, but for greater success, it's recommended to allow the bait to remain mostly steady until the gar is directly beside the plug.

Region

The spotted gar's current range is from southern Ontario to the west from the Nueces River in Texas east to the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico and southeast to the lower Apalachicola River in Florida.

Habitat

Habitats for spotted gar are clear, slow-moving, shallow waters of creeks, rivers, and lakes. It occasionally enters brackish waters. In response to the low-oxygen levels created by slow-moving water, gars have developed the ability to gulp air and send it to a primitive lung called a gas bladder. In one study, most spotted gar were shoreline oriented, preferred submerged branches as cover, and avoided areas of exposed bank. During a flood pulse, a floodplain provides habitat for spawning and nursery habitat for gar eggs.

Tips to Catch

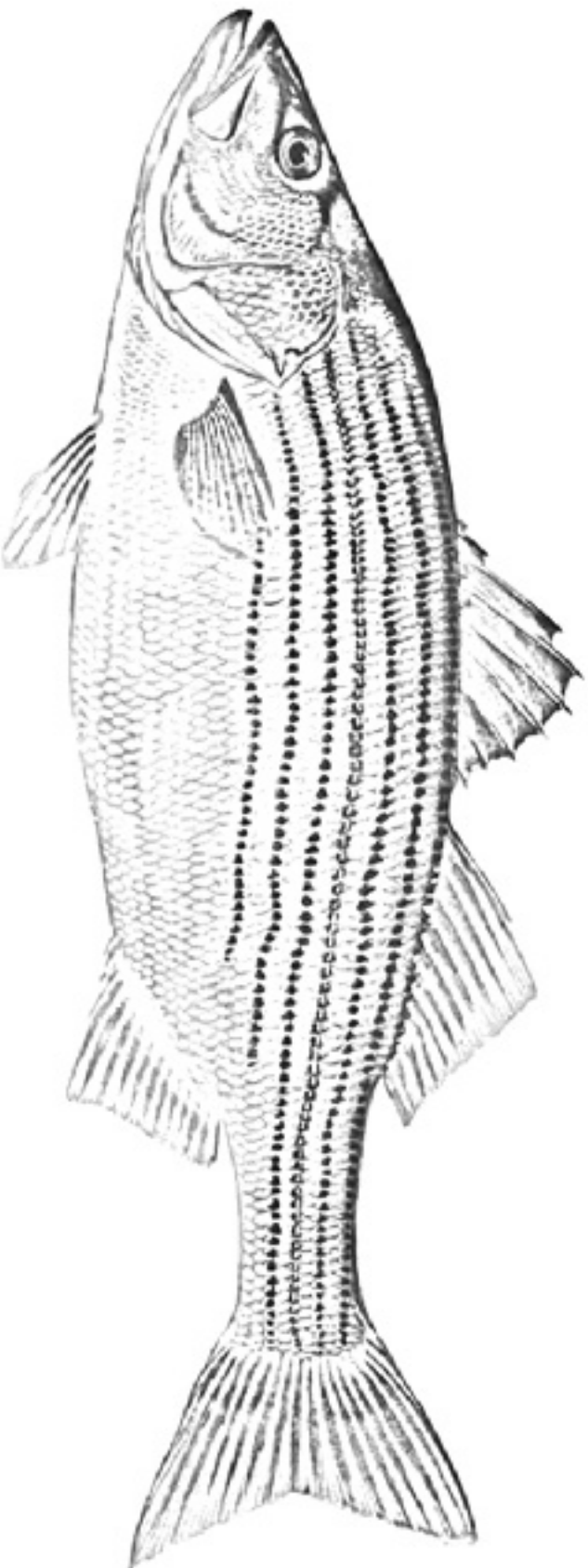
Successful gar fishing is at its best during the hottest weeks of summer. Best times are at dawn or dusk where they can be seen slowly moving near the water's surface. Slower moving or stagnant water near bayous and stream inlets are likely locations to find spotted gar.



Hard to Catch



Spotted Gar



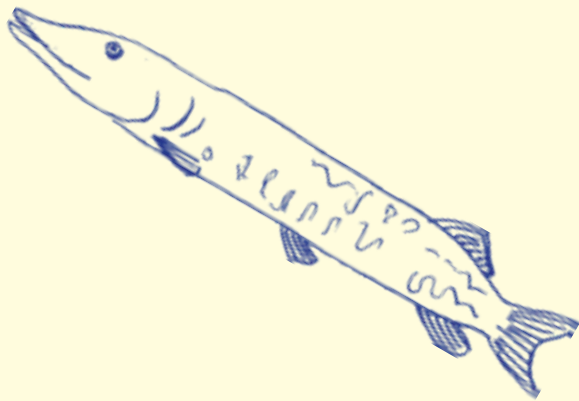
Striped Bass

Striped Bass

Morone saxatilis

Description

The striped bass is a relatively new catch for anglers in the United States. They inhabit mostly saltwater, and can be found in the gulf, in bays, and up rivers that lead from saltwater. They have white meat, which is extremely versatile in that it can be pan-seared, grilled, steamed, poached, roasted, broiled, sautéed, and deep fried (including batter-frying).



Key Indication Marks

Striped Bass have a streamlined, silvery body marked with longitudinal dark stripes running from behind the gills to the base of the tail. Common mature size is 8 to 40 pounds.

Lures to Use

Skitter Walk, Danny Surface Swimmer, Jumping Minnow. Live bait such as herring, menhaden, mackerel, eels, squid, clams, anchovies, bloodworms, shad, nightcrawlers and sandworms also work well.

Region

Striped bass are native to the Atlantic coastline of North America from the St. Lawrence River into the Gulf of Mexico to approximately Louisiana. They are anadromous fish that migrate between fresh and salt water. Spawning takes place in fresh water. They have also been introduced to the Pacific Coast of North America and into many of the large reservoir impoundments across the United States.

Habitat

Striped bass move upstream from saltwater in the springtime to spawn in fresh water. They then spend summer and winter in deep channels, as they tend to lurk in bays and rivers.

Tips to Catch

Striped bass tend to feed at dusk and dawn, so you will have an increased chance of landing one if you fish during these times. Try using live eels. Places like Cape Cod Bay have produced Striped Bass up to 40 pounds using live eels.



Not so Easy to Catch

Walleye

Sander vitreus

Description

The walleye is the biggest member of the perch family and is a very common freshwater game fish. It gets its name from a special pigment layer in its eye that reflects lights. This allows them to see more clearly in dark and murky water. Because of this, they are sensitive to light and will venture into deep waters on clear days.

Region

Walleye are native to Canada, the Great Lakes, the Missouri River basin and the upper Mississippi River basin, and have been introduced in the western and northeastern United States.

Habitat

Due to their sensitivity to light, walleye dwell in the cloudy water of rivers, streams, lakes, and other region of freshwater. They like to rest on rock or sandy bottoms and prefer to have many weeds to forage in. They will oftentimes occupy weed beds or the inside of logs to escape the light.

Tips to Catch

Since walleyes have excellent visual acuity under low illumination levels, they tend to feed more extensively at dawn and dusk, on cloudy or overcast days, and under choppy conditions when light penetration into the water column is disrupted. Although anglers interpret this as light avoidance, it is merely an expression of the walleyes' competitive advantage over their prey under those conditions. Similarly, in darkly stained or turbid waters, walleyes tend to feed throughout the day. In the spring and fall, walleyes are located near the shallower areas due to the spawning grounds, and they are most often located in shallower areas during higher winds due to the murkier, higher oxygenated water at around six feet deep. On calm spring days, walleyes are more often located at the deep side of the shoreline drop-off and around shore slopes around or deeper than 10 feet.

Key Indication Marks

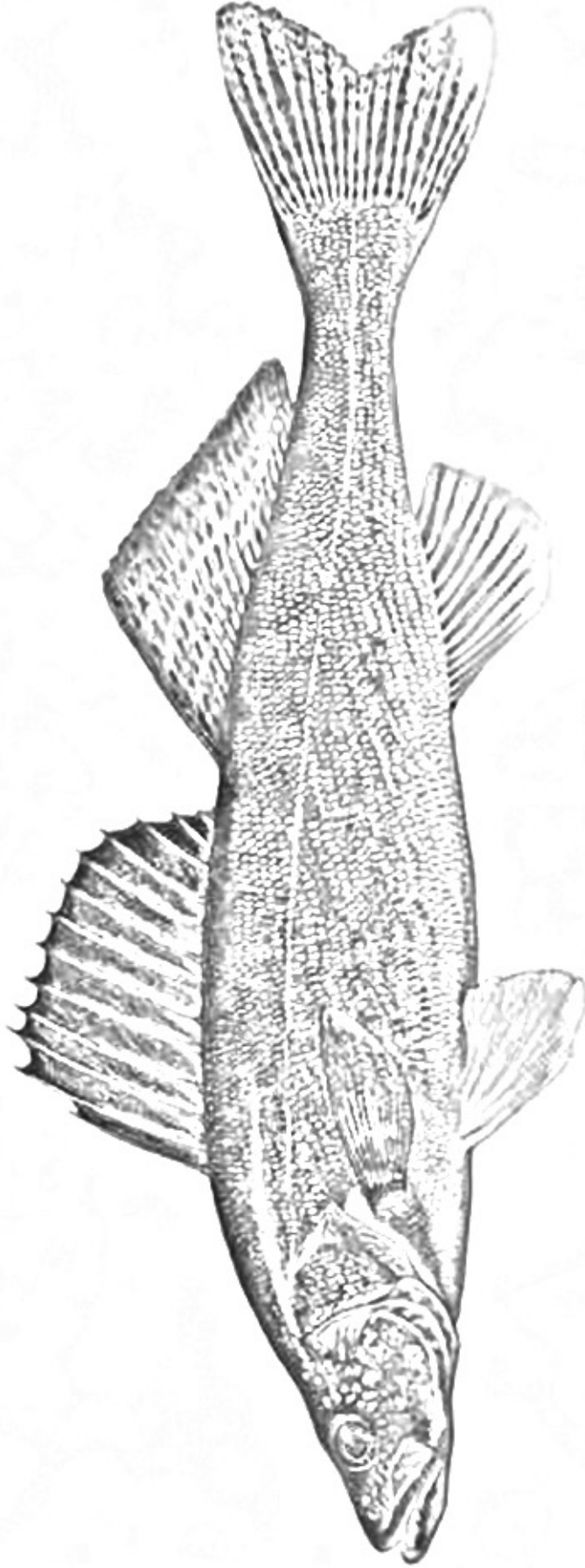
Walleye are olive and gold in color fading to a white underside. They have large dark spots on their back and smaller dark spots on their fins. This fish has a large mouth filled with many razor-sharp teeth.

Lures to Use

Spinnders, jerk baits, crankbaits, and jiggs are among the best lures to use.

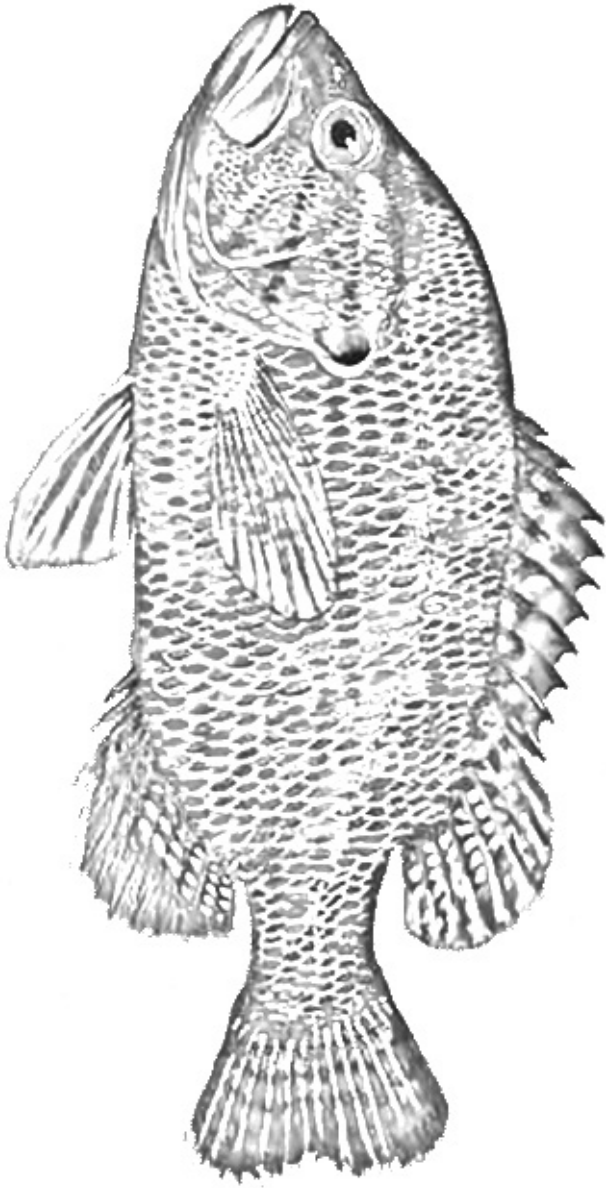


Easy to Catch



Walleye

Warmouth



Warmouth

Lepomis gulosus

Description

The warmouth is a highly aggressive and hardy fish, and its habits are predictable to experienced anglers. Chances are, if you peek into a hollow cypress tree or stump in a fertile lake or stream where warmouth are common, you will find up to half a dozen of these fish hiding inside. They are known as feisty, moody fish, but if you catch them in the right waters, they make a great dinner.

Key Indication Marks

The adult warmouth is dark, with a mottled brown coloration. Its belly is generally golden, and the male has a bright-orange spot at the base of the dorsal fin. Three to five reddish-brown streaks radiate from the eyes, and the gill flaps are often red. This fish also has small teeth that are present on the tongue. The warmouth is occasionally confused with the rock bass or green sunfish, both of which share its relatively large mouth and heavy body. However, the green sunfish generally has a greenish-blue variegated pattern on its gill flaps, a black spot near the base of the dorsal fin, and its fins are bordered in yellowish-white. The rock bass has 5-7 spines in its anal fin as opposed to the 3 in the warmouth.

Lures to Use

Small crankbaits, crickets, worms, small crayfish and minnows, jigs, spoons, plastic worms, spinners, flies, streamers and plugs.

Region

Found throughout much of the south in the Mississippi River drainage, from the Gulf and Atlantic coasts and northward to the Chesapeake Bay, and westward throughout Texas to the Rio Grande, and northward into the Great Lakes basin area.

Habitat

They are found in ponds, lakes, rivers, and backwater streams and can often survive in streams with low oxygen levels where other species of sunfish cannot.

Tips to Catch

Warmouth like hiding in shelters, so look for beaver lodges, hollow trees, or root systems where they could be sheltering. Use a jigging pole or cane pole to lower a small jig down into the small openings where they are hiding.



Easy to Catch

White Bass

Morone chrysops

Description

The white bass is a freshwater fish, with its largest populations in the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River system. In Pennsylvania, the white bass is native to the western counties, especially Lake Erie and the Ohio River watershed. Its species name "chrysops" refers to the fish's golden eye. While similar to the striped bass, white bass also have faint stripes and are sometimes very stocky.



Key Indication Marks

Mainly silver-white to pale green in color. Its back is dark, with white sides and belly, and with narrow dark stripes running lengthwise on its sides. The dorsal and tail fins are a dark grey color.

Lures to Use

Try a ¼-ounce leadhead jig rigged with a 2 ½-inch plastic curltail trailer (white or pearl in clear water, chartreuse in stained water). White bass like to hang out towards the bottom of their lake or stream, so aim for the bottom and jig your bait to maintain contact with the bed.

Region

Their range stretches north into the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Manitoba and reaches southward limits in the State of Louisiana. It can be found in New Mexico, Texas and the Gulf Coast States by way of the Mississippi River.

Habitat

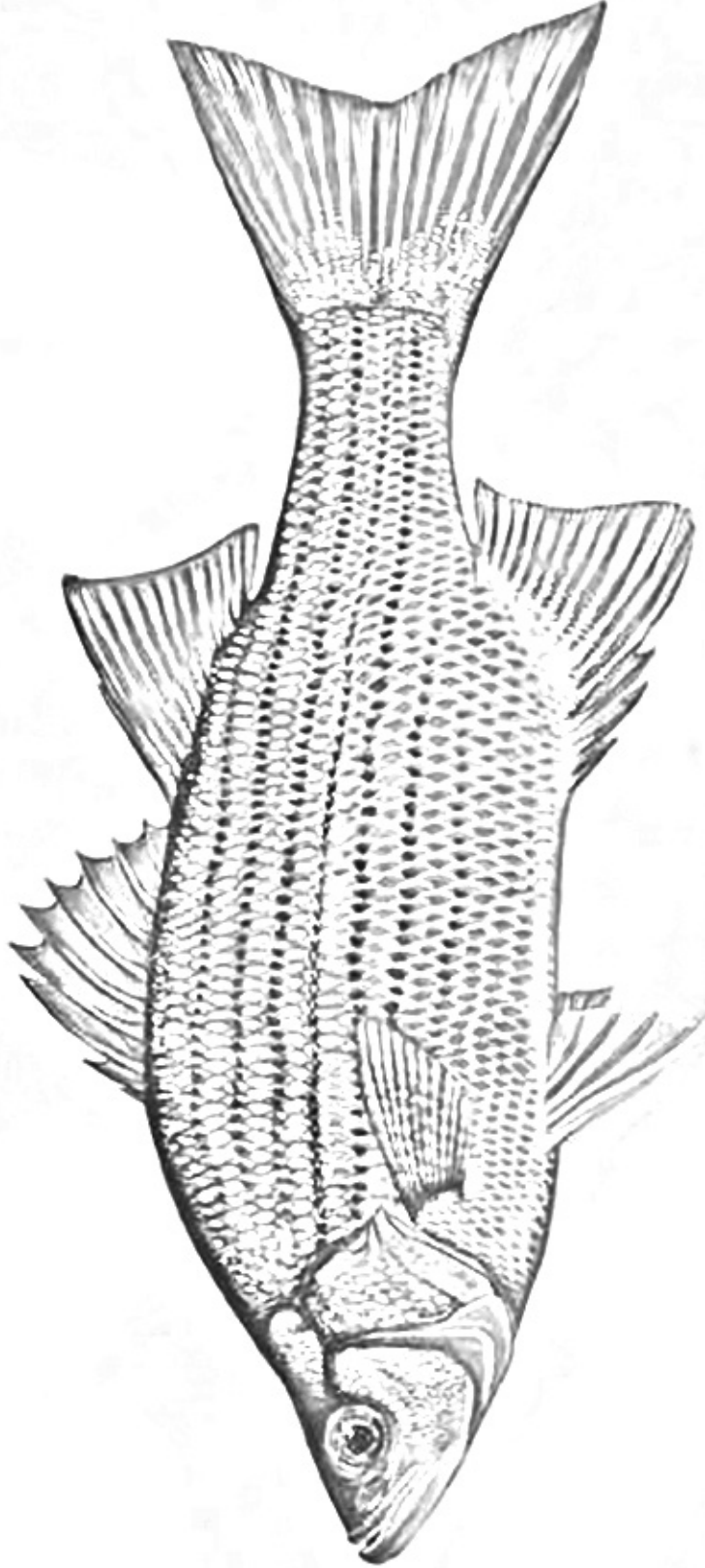
White bass inhabit mostly rivers, creeks, and streams, but can be found spawning in medium and large lakes, as well as manmade reservoirs. They prefer clear water.

Tips to Catch

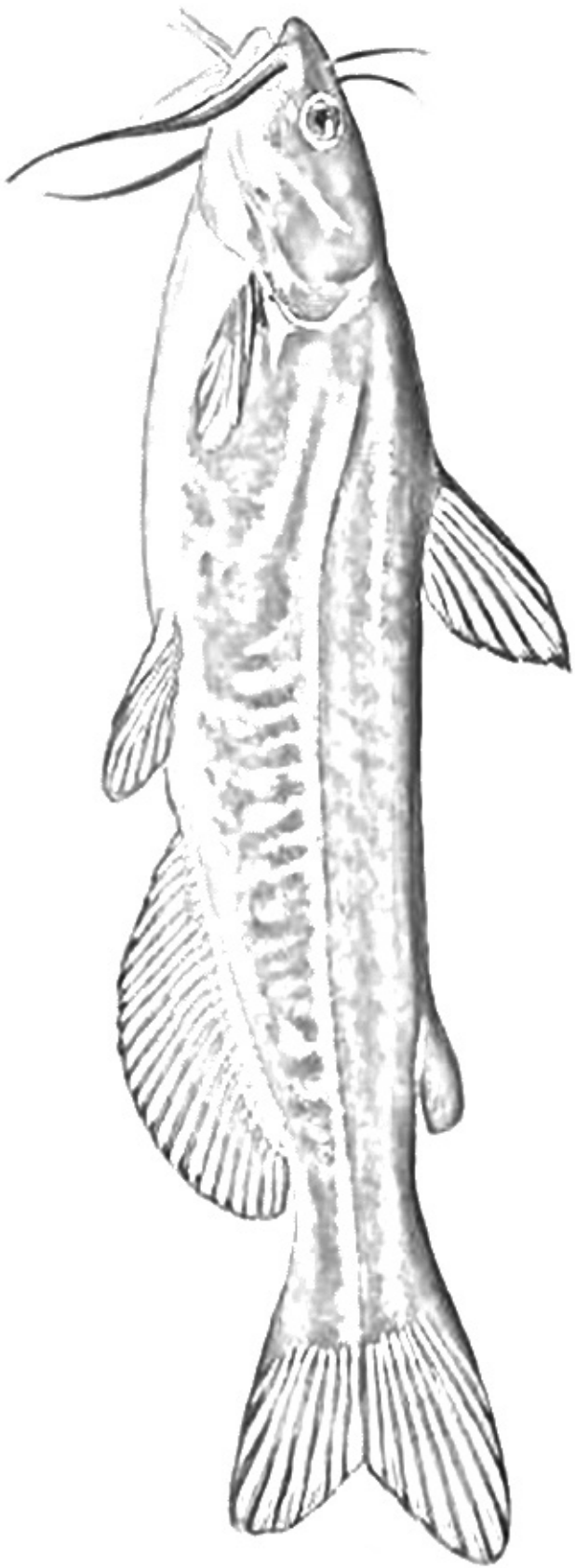
Their aggressive nature and schooling tendency make them easy fish to catch. Use light tackle, with flies, spinners, small plugs or minnows for bait. Look for feeding schools that occur toward evening in shallow areas. Look up for birds like gulls and see where they are going. Gulls are good indicators of bait fish, and bait fish are good indicators of white bass.



Easy to Catch



White Bass



White Bullhead

White Bullhead

Ameiurus catus

Description

Also known as the white catfish, white bullhead are considered a minor game fish, and they are sought after for food. They can be introduced into streams with high pollution because of their high tolerance to pollution. A special kind of catfish that does not have scales, bullheads can be distinguished from channel catfish and blue catfish by their squared tailfins, rather than forked.



Key Indication Marks

The white bullhead catfish has a head with eight barbels: two nasal, two maxillary and four chin. It is scaleless, and has a spine on the anterior edge of its dorsal and pectoral fins. It usually has six dorsal soft rays. It does not have palatine teeth.

Lures to Use

Lob Worm, Mealworm, hotdogs, Cut Fish Pieces, Bacon, Liver.

Region

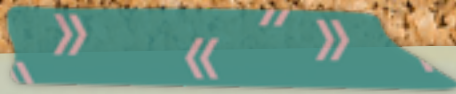
They range throughout the central and eastern US from central Texas, north into North Dakota, and east through the Great Lakes region to the East Coast.

Habitat

Bullhead catfish are bottom dwellers, living in areas with muck, rock, sand, or clay substrates. Its habitat includes river pools, backwaters, and sluggish current over soft or mildly rocky substrate in creeks, small to larger rivers, and shallow portions of lakes and ponds. Their habitat can vary from a slow current with poorly oxygenated, highly silted, and highly polluted water to a more swift current with clean and clear water that has aquatic vegetation.

Tips to Catch

Use a hypodermic syringe or "worm blower" to inflate your worms as this makes them float on the surface, making them more visible to your prey. Your sinker sits on bottom while your crawlers ride high. Soak your fishing worms in pickled beet juice for several hours. This gives the bait a red color that's more attractive to bullheads.



Easy to Catch

Yellow Bullhead

Ameiurus natalis

Description

Yellow bullheads are considered a minor game fish, and they are sought after for food. The yellow bullhead is a voracious scavenger that will almost eat anything. It locates prey by brushing the stream bottom with its barbels. Taste buds on the barbels tell the bullhead whether or not contact is made with edible prey.



Key Indication Marks

The Yellow Bullhead Catfish is typically yellow-olive to slatey-black on the back and sometimes mottled depending on habitat. The sides are lighter and more yellowish, while the underside of the head and body are bright yellow, yellow white, or bright white. The yellow bullhead, though less common, can be easily distinguished from the brown bullhead and black bullhead by its white barbels or "whiskers".

Lures to Use

Lob Worm, Mealworm, hotdogs, Cut Fish Pieces, Bacon, Liver.

Region

Range throughout the central and eastern US from central Texas, north into North Dakota, and east through the Great Lakes region to the East Coast.

Habitat

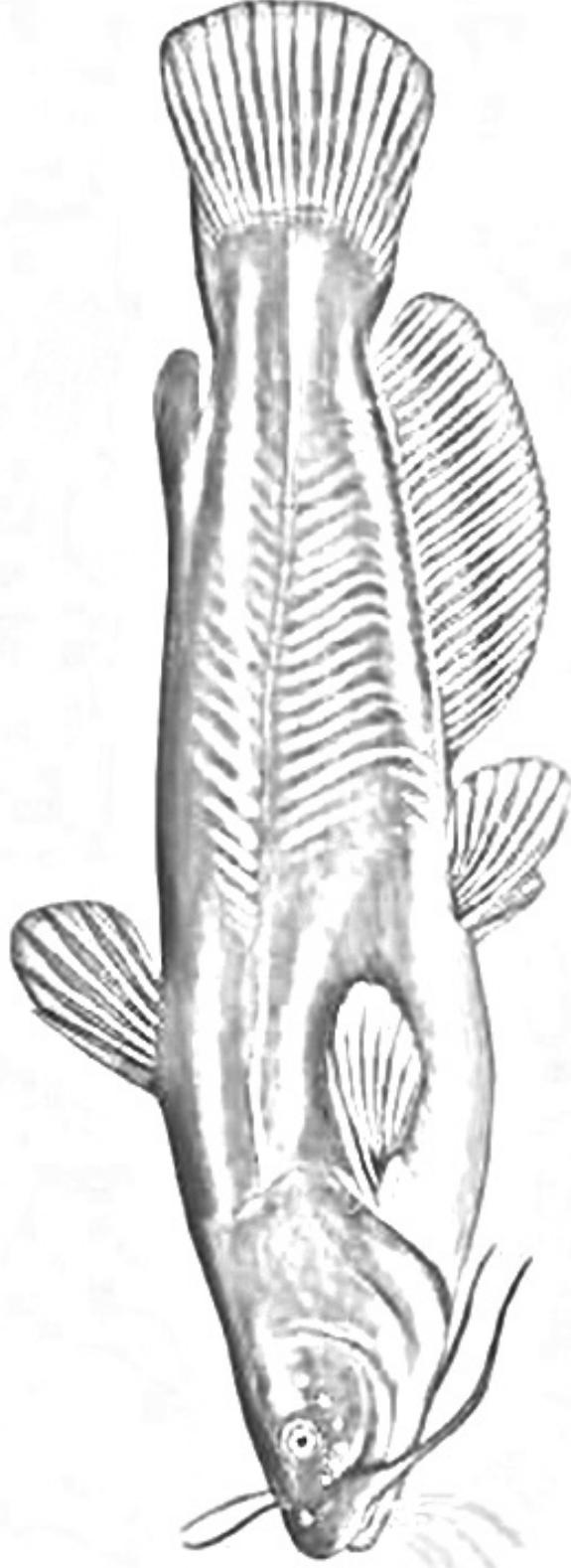
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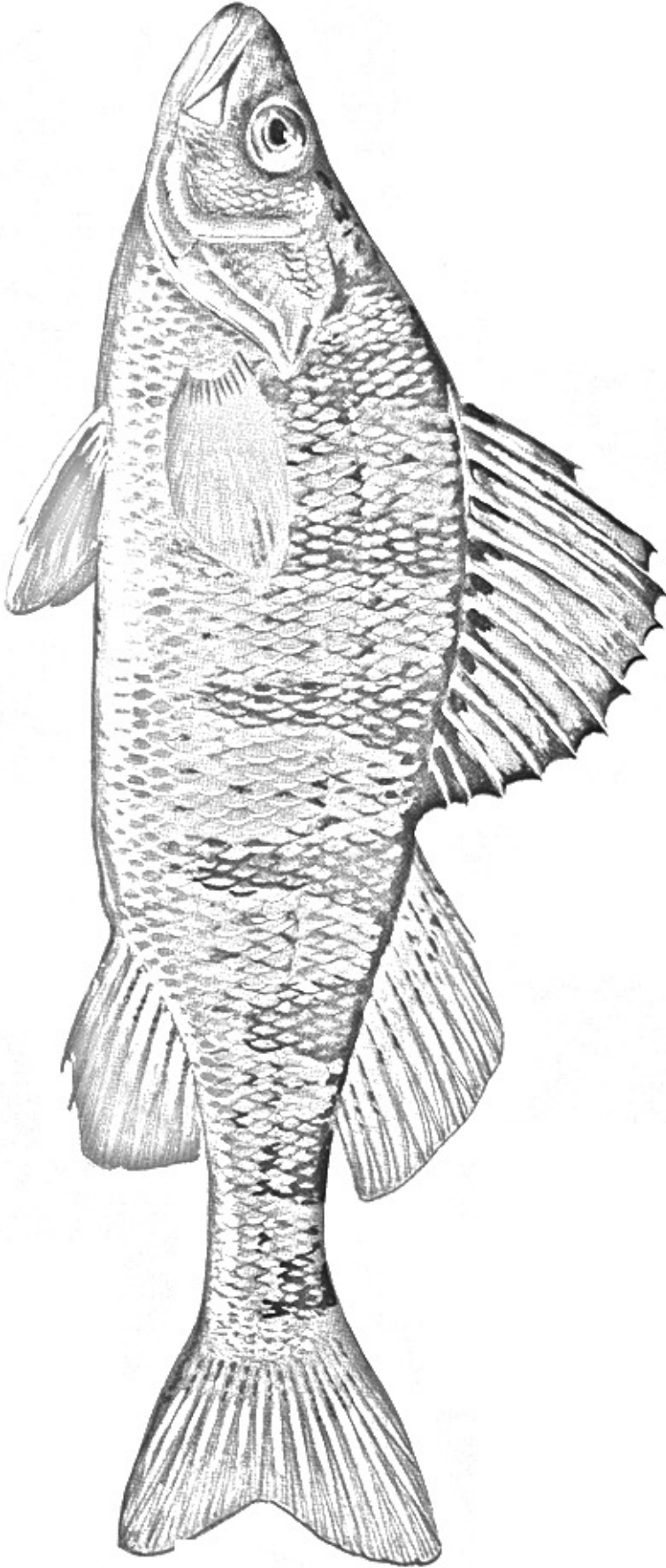


Easy to Catch



Yellow Bullhead

Yellow Perch



Yellow Perch

Perca flavescens

Description

Yellow perch are a popular sport fish, prized by both recreational anglers and commercial fishermen for their delicious, mild flavor. It has been widely introduced for sport and commercial fishing purposes. It has also been introduced to establish a forage base for bass and walleye. Almost every cool to warm water predatory fish species, such as northern pike, muskellunge, bass, sunfish, crappie, walleye, trout, and even other yellow perch, are predators of the yellow perch. They are the primary prey for walleye who consume 58% of the age zero and 47% of the age one yellow perch in northern lakes.

Key Indication Marks

The yellow perch has a yellow to brass-colored body and distinct pattern, consisting of five to nine olive-green, vertical bars, triangular in shape, on each side. Its fins are lighter in coloration, with an orange hue on the margins. The body is laterally compressed. As with all percid fishes, yellow perch have two dorsal fins, and the caudal fin of the yellow perch is forked.

Lures to Use

Worms, live and dead minnows, small freshwater clams, crickets, and any small lure resembling any of these.

Region

Yellow perch are only found in North America; they are native to the Arctic, Atlantic, Great Lakes/St. Lawrence River, and Mississippi River basins. In Canada, its native range extends throughout Nova Scotia and Quebec north to the Mackenzie River.

Habitat

Their habitat is usually along the shore among reeds and aquatic weeds, docks, and other structures. They are most dense within aquatic vegetation, since they naturally school, but also prefer small weed-filled water bodies with muck, gravel, or sand bottoms. They are less abundant in deep and clear open water or unproductive lakes. Within rivers, they only frequent pools, slack water, and moderately vegetated habitat. They frequent inshore surface waters during the summer.

Tips to Catch

Fish near the bottom of your body of water, as perch usually hide along structures and roots. Allow the bait to hit the bottom before wheeling back in. Perch are attracted to noises and vibrations, so run your boat motor if possible.



Easy to Catch

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