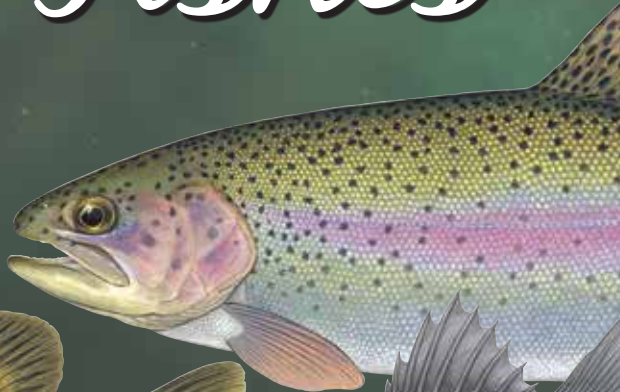


# Kentucky Fishes



Kentucky Department of  
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# Kentucky Fishes

by

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2011  
*(Third edition, 2021)*

*Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources*  
Division of Fisheries

# Preface

Kentucky is home to a total of 245 native fish species with an additional 24 that have been introduced either intentionally (i.e., for sport) or accidentally. Within the United States, Kentucky's native freshwater fish diversity is exceeded only by Alabama and Tennessee. This high diversity of native fishes corresponds to an abundance of water bodies and wide variety of aquatic habitats across the state – from swift upland streams to large sluggish rivers, oxbow lakes, and wetlands.

Approximately 25 species are most frequently caught by anglers either for sport or food. Many of these species occur in streams and rivers statewide, while several are routinely stocked in public and private water bodies across the state, especially ponds and reservoirs. The largest proportion of Kentucky's fish fauna (80%) includes darters, minnows, suckers, madtoms, smaller sunfishes, and other groups (e.g., lampreys) that are rarely seen by most people. Nevertheless, these nongame species have important roles in stream and river ecosystems. The loss of these species and their habitats is a sign of poor stream health and an imbalanced ecosystem, which in turn can negatively affect the sport fishery.

With a few exceptions, this booklet is intended to serve as a reference to the most common fishes occurring in Kentucky. It includes larger species often encountered by anglers as well as other common nongame species that are less known due to their small size or cryptic habits. These species are grouped by family (scientific name in parentheses) and organized alphabetically by scientific name within each family. To aid in identification, a photograph (or two) is included for each species accompanied by a short description of distinguishing features, maximum total length, distribution, and habitat. Labeled diagrams illustrating basic fish anatomy and terms used in the text are available on the back cover.

Please enjoy using this booklet to learn more about Kentucky's rich fish fauna!

## Acknowledgements

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## Northern Lamprey Family (Petromyzontidae)

Lampreys are jawless fishes representing one of the most ancient vertebrate groups in existence. Eight species are native to Kentucky, including three that are parasitic and five that are nonparasitic. Lampreys are easily identified by their long, eel-like bodies and circular mouths. Adults of parasitic species are often found attached to a host fish. Larval lampreys, called ammocoetes, are usually found burrowed in soft bottoms of streams. Two of the state's most common species are presented below.

### LEAST BROOK LAMPREY (*Lampetra aepyptera*)



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A nonparasitic lamprey with a small circular mouth and two dorsal fins. Adults grow to about 7 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common throughout most of the state except extreme western Kentucky, Tradewater River basin, and Blue Grass region. Usually found in small to medium-sized streams with gravel and sandy bottoms.

### OHIO LAMPREY (*Ichthyomyzon bdellium*)



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A parasitic lamprey with a large circular mouth and one slightly notched dorsal fin. Adults grow to about 12 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs in larger streams and rivers from the upper Green River basin eastward. Adults are often seen attached to a larger host fish.

## Sturgeon Family (Acipenseridae)

Three species of sturgeon are known from Kentucky. Sturgeon are large, heavy-bodied fish with several distinctive features, including a cartilage skeleton and five rows of bony plates called scutes that run along the length of the body. They are bottom feeders using sensitive barbels under the snout to locate food items, such as small invertebrates, which are sucked in through a protrusible mouth. The Shovel-nose Sturgeon is the species most frequently encountered in Kentucky. The Lake Sturgeon is extremely rare, but efforts are underway to re-establish a native population to the Cumberland River. The Pallid Sturgeon (not shown) occurs in the Mississippi River in western Kentucky and is federally protected as an endangered species.

### LAKE STURGEON (*Acipenser fulvescens*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A large, robust sturgeon distinguished by its short cone-shaped snout and short caudal peduncle. Young individuals have a dark blotchy pattern on the body, which fades to solid gray in adults. Adults grow to about 8 ft. (310 lbs), although average size for most adults is considerably smaller.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Formerly occupied main channels of Ohio, Mississippi, Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers. As a result of reintroduction efforts by Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, Lake Sturgeon may be found in the Cumberland River from Wolf Creek Dam (Lake Cumberland) upstream to Cumberland Falls.

### SHOVELNOSE STURGEON (*Scaphirhynchus platorhynchus*)



John MacGregor / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A relatively small, slender sturgeon distinguished by its long shovel-shaped snout, and long, slender caudal peduncle. Young and adults are solid brown or gray. Adults grow to about 3 ft (10 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Known primarily from main channels of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, but also likely present in main channels of the lower Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, as well as the Green, Kentucky, and Licking rivers.

## Paddlefish Family (Polyodontidae)

The Paddlefish is the only North American representative of this family. This large, distinctive plankton-feeder lives in large turbid rivers and impoundments of the Mississippi basin. Large numbers of individuals often occur below dams of large reservoirs. The Paddlefish is a commercially important species, particularly valued for its eggs, which are sold as caviar.



**PADDFISH** (*Polyodon spathula*)

Brooks Burr / Southern Illinois University Carbondale

↑ **Identification:** A large fish easily distinguished by its long paddle-shaped snout, mostly scaleless “shark-like” body, and large pointed flap on the gill cover. Adults grow to about 5 ft. (185 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occupies main channels of large rivers statewide, including the Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Cumberland, Green, Salt, Kentucky, and Licking rivers. Also occurs in reservoirs, including Kentucky, Barkley, Cumberland lakes.

## Gar Family (Lepisosteidae)

Four species of gar are native to Kentucky. Gars are an ancient group of fishes that occur in a variety of habitats, although they are usually associated with large bodies of water such as rivers and reservoirs. They are often seen either alone or in loosely formed groups resting just beneath the surface. While gars are generally scorned by anglers and commercial fishers, they have an important ecological role as a top predator in reducing overpopulation of forage fishes.



**ALLIGATOR GAR** (*Atractosteus spatula*)

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources



## SPOTTED GAR (*Lepisosteus oculatus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

## LONGNOSE GAR (*Lepisosteus osseus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

## SHORTNOSE GAR (*Lepisosteus platostomus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

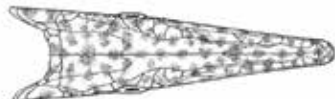
### ALLIGATOR



### SHORTNOSE



### SPOTTED



### LONGNOSE



Eugene Beckham / Northwood University

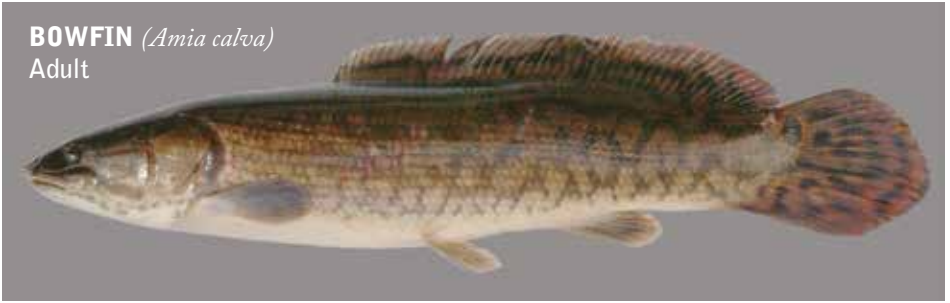
**↑ Identification:** All gars have long and slender bodies, beak-like jaws, and large, diamond-shaped scales. Alligator Gar is the largest species, reaching 9 ft. (300 lbs). It is distinguished from other gars by its short, broad snout, and heavy body. Spotted Gar has a unique pattern of large spots on the top of head and body. Shortnose Gar is similar to Spotted Gar, but lacks spots on head and body. Both species are usually less than 3 ft. (5-10 lbs). Longnose Gar is easily distinguished from other gars by having an extremely long and narrow snout. It can grow to 6 ft. (50 lbs). Differences in head shape among the four species of gar are illustrated at left.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Longnose Gar is common statewide in streams, rivers, and reservoirs. Spotted Gar and Shortnose Gar occur in the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and in western Kentucky, from the lower Green River basin to the Mississippi River. Alligator Gar once occurred in the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers and in backwaters and embayments along the lower Ohio and Mississippi River floodplains in western Kentucky. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources is working to re-establish populations to these former native habitats.

## Bowfin Family (Amiidae)

The Bowfin is the only living member of this ancient family in North America. This unique species exhibits several unusual anatomical features and behaviors, including the ability to tolerate low oxygen conditions by using its swim bladder as a primitive lung.

**BOWFIN** (*Amia calva*)  
Adult



*Fritz Robde / NOAA Fisheries Service*

Immature



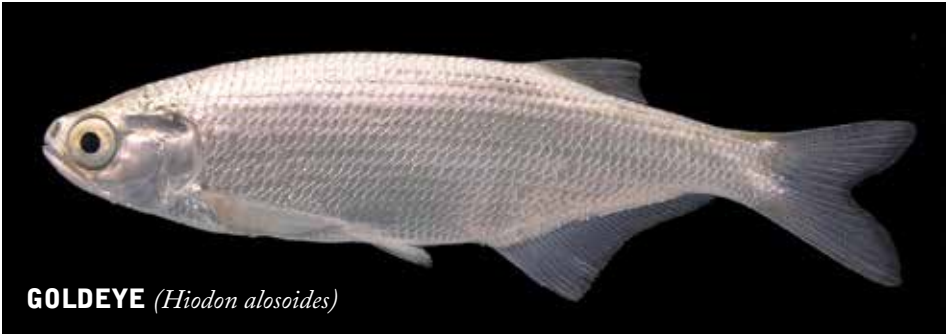
*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A long, cylindrical fish easily distinguished by its long dorsal fin, rounded caudal fin, large mouth, and tubular nostrils. Young individuals and adult males have a round black spot at the upper base of the tail. Adults grow to about 3 ft. (20 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Primarily occurs in lowland streams and rivers, oxbow lakes, sloughs, and swamps from the lower Green River drainage westward. Occurrences in Ohio River tributaries in central and northeastern Kentucky are rare.

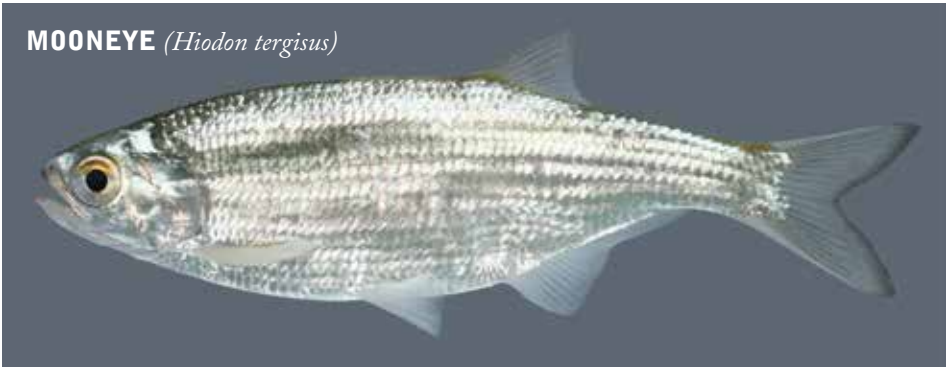
## Mooneye Family (Hiodontidae)

This family is restricted to North America and contains only two species, both of which occur in Kentucky. Mooneyes have teeth on the jaws, tongue, and roof of the mouth. They are sometimes called “toothed herrings” because of their resemblance to herrings, but the two groups are not closely related. Both species feed mostly on insects and small fishes near the surface of the water.



**GOLDEYE** (*Hiodon alosoides*)

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources



**MOONEYE** (*Hiodon tergisus*)

Uland Thomas / North American Native Fishes Association

↑ **Identification:** The mooneyes are silvery, deep-bodied, and thin (shad-like). They differ from shad and herrings by having a lateral line (vs. absent) and a smooth (vs. saw-toothed) keel along the belly. The Goldeye is similar to the Mooneye, but differs by having the dorsal fin origin in front of the anal fin origin (vs. dorsal fin origin behind anal fin origin) and fleshy keel along the belly extending from between the pelvic fins to the anal fin base (vs. keel extending from between the pectoral fins to the anal fin base). The Goldeye grows to about 20 in. and the Mooneye reaches about 18 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Both Goldeye and Mooneye occur in deep pools and channels of medium to large rivers throughout the state. Although both species are relatively common in the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, the Mooneye tends to be more common in higher gradient tributaries, whereas the Goldeye appears to favor larger lowland rivers. Both species have also been found in large reservoirs.

## Freshwater Eel Family (Anguillidae)

The American Eel is the only representative of this family in North America. This distinctive member of Kentucky's fish fauna spawns in the Atlantic Ocean. Young eels travel great distances through the Gulf of Mexico to reach freshwaters of the Mississippi basin, including the Ohio River and its tributaries, where they mature. American Eel populations have declined in recent years mostly because of dams that block natural migrations.



**AMERICAN EEL** (*Anguilla rostrata*)

*John MacGregor / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** The American Eel is easily distinguished by its long, snake-like body and head, long dorsal fin that is continuous with the caudal fin, and having no pelvic fins. Adults grow to about 5 ft.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs sporadically in large rivers and reservoirs statewide. Eels are seldom seen due to their habit of hiding among debris along bottoms of deep pools and channels.

## Herring and Shad Family (Clupeidae)

Kentucky is home to three species of shad and two species of herring, including the Alewife, a native of the Atlantic Coast that has been introduced in reservoirs as a forage fish. Herrings and shads are easily recognized by their silvery, slab-sided bodies and saw-toothed keel along the midline of the belly. They generally swim in large schools and constitute an important forage base for larger sport fishes. Two of the most common species and one that has been widely introduced are presented here.

## SKIPJACK HERRING

(*Alosa chrysochloris*)



Uland Thomas / North American Native Fishes Association

➦ **Identification:** A silvery fish with a slender body that is thin from side to side and not as deep as the Threadfin and Gizzard shads (see below). It has a lower jaw that projects beyond the snout and lacks a dark spot behind the gill cover. Adults grow to 21 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs statewide, but primarily in main channels of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers and lower reaches of major tributaries. Skipjacks also occur in main channels of large reservoirs and often aggregate in strong current of tailwaters.

## GIZZARD SHAD

(*Dorosoma cepedianum*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

◀ **Identification:** The Gizzard Shad has a long, whip-like last dorsal fin ray, rounded snout, and dark spot behind gill cover in young and small adults. Adults grow to 20 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common

statewide, inhabiting virtually all river and reservoir habitats, but usually avoids small creeks. The Gizzard Shad feeds on plankton and is often seen in schools in deep open water near the surface.

## ➔ **Identification:**

Similar to the Gizzard Shad, but reaches a smaller adult size, has a protruding lower jaw, and yellow-tinted fins. Adults grow to 9 in.

## THREADFIN SHAD

(*Dorosoma petenense*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

**Distribution and Habitat:** Open waters of larger rivers statewide, but also introduced into reservoirs throughout the state as a forage fish. Like Gizzard Shad, this species is a schooling plankton feeder; however it is less tolerant of cold water, which often results in large winter die-offs.

## Carp and Minnow Family (Cyprinidae)

Kentucky has a rich assemblage of minnows, with 64 native species. Six additional species are exotic and have been introduced for biological control of vegetation and water quality (Grass, Silver, and Bighead carps) or fish parasites (Black Carp) in aquaculture ponds. Others have been imported as food or ornamental aquarium fish (Common Carp and Goldfish). Minnows are extremely diverse, occur in a wide range of habitats, and usually are more numerous than all other fishes combined. They are important as forage for larger sport fishes and are valuable ecological indicators of water quality. Below are six common native species most likely seen by people, as well as four of the well-known exotic species, including the highly invasive Asian carps.

Breeding male

**CENTRAL STONEROLLER**  
(*Campostoma anomalum*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

Female



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** Stonerollers have a rounded snout overhanging a crescent-shaped mouth, a hard ridge of cartilage on the lower lip, and irregular patches of dark colored scales on the sides of the body. Breeding males have orange colored fins with a black band on the dorsal fin and often on the anal fin; breeding tubercles (keratinized growths) also cover the head, back, and sides of the body. The Central Stoneroller is very similar to the Largescale Stoneroller (*Campostoma oligolepis*), but differs by having a crescent-shaped row of 1-3 large tubercles on the inner edge of the nostril (absent in Central Stoneroller) in breeding males. Both species grow to about 8.5 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Stonerollers are among most abundant minnows in rocky riffles and runs of small creeks to medium rivers statewide. The Central Stoneroller occupies Ohio River tributaries from the Salt River eastward and the Cumberland River drainage above Cumberland Falls. The Largescale Stoneroller occurs from the Clarks River drainage in western Kentucky, eastward to the Cumberland River below the Falls.

## SOUTHERN REDBELLY DACE

(*Chrosomus erythrogaster*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A small fish with two parallel black stripes along the side. Males in breeding condition are among the most colorful minnows in the state, having solid red along the underside of the body and bright yellow fins. It is similar to the federally protected Blackside Dace (*Chrosomus cumberlandensis*), but differs by having two lateral stripes (vs. one broad black stripe) along the side of the body. Adults grow to 3.5 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Inhabits small, often spring-fed, upland creeks with cool, clear water throughout the eastern two-thirds of the state. It sometimes occurs with the Blackside Dace in the upper Cumberland River drainage (mostly above Cumberland Falls).

## GRASS CARP

(*Ctenopharyngodon idella*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A large fish with a wide head, robust body, and large, dark-edged scales. Color is dark olive above, becoming silvery or white on the sides and belly. Adults grow to about 4 ft. (100 lbs), although most fish reported from Kentucky are less than 50lbs.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Native to eastern Asia, the Grass Carp has been introduced statewide in private ponds and small public reservoirs to control unwanted aquatic vegetation. Escapees from stockings are taken regularly from larger streams and rivers, particularly in western Kentucky.

## COMMON CARP

(*Cyprinus carpio*)



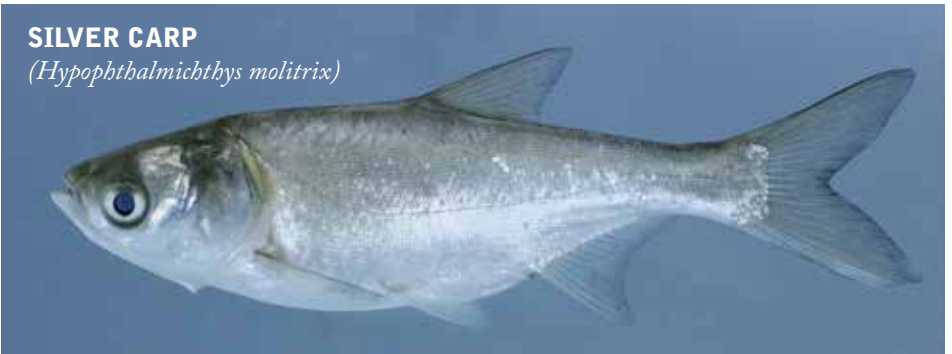
Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A large, deep-bodied fish with two short barbels on each side of the mouth, large scales, and long dorsal fin. Color is olive to brassy on the back and sides with a pale yellow belly, and orange tinted lower fins. Adults grow to about 4 ft. (80 lbs), but individuals in the 12-30 in. (1-20 lb) size range are most common.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Native to Europe and Asia, the Common Carp was widely introduced in North America in the mid-1800's. It occurs in a variety of habitats throughout Kentucky, but is most abundant in reservoirs and main channels of rivers.

## SILVER CARP

(*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

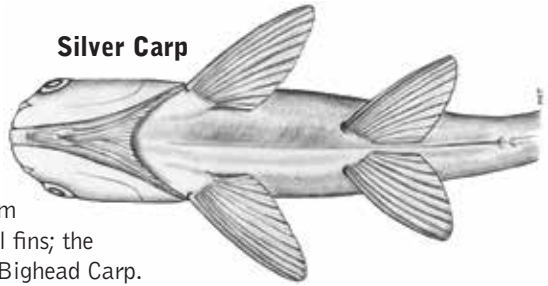
## BIGHEAD CARP (*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*)



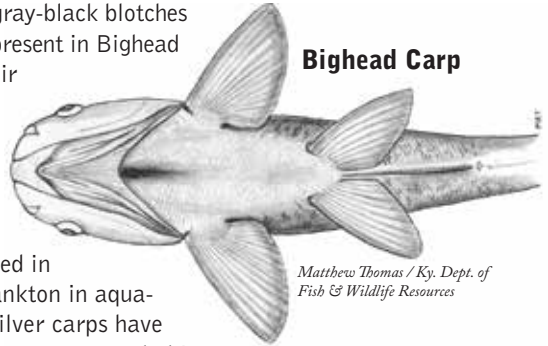
Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources



**Identification:** Bighead and Silver carps, referred to collectively as Asian carps, are distinguished from other fishes by having the eye below the midline of the head. Silver Carp differ from Bighead Carp by having a keel extending from the anus to the origin of the pectoral fins; the keel ends between the pelvic fins in Bighead Carp. Silver Carp also lack the irregular gray-black blotches on the sides of the body, which are present in Bighead Carp. Silver Carp are known for their jumping behavior, which is rarely seen in Bighead Carp. Both species can grow up to 4 ft., weighing over 75 lbs, but adults more commonly range from 10-20 lbs.



**Silver Carp**



**Bighead Carp**

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

**Distribution and Habitat:** Introduced in the early 1970s to reduce phytoplankton in aquaculture ponds, both Bighead and Silver carps have since escaped and are established in open water habitats of large rivers and reservoirs in the Mississippi River basin.

**STRIPED SHINER**

*(Luxilus chrysocephalus)*



Breeding male

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

Female



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

**Identification:** A large, deep-bodied minnow with large scales and three dark stripes on the upper side that meet behind the dorsal fin forming large V-shapes. Males in breeding condition develop pink color on the sides and fins. Adults grow to about 9 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common statewide except for the Mississippi Coastal Plain west of the lower Tennessee River (Kentucky Lake). The Striped Shiner generally prefers small to medium-sized upland streams with clear water over rocky bottoms of pools and riffles.

Mississippi Coastal Plain west of the lower Tennessee River (Kentucky Lake). The Striped Shiner generally prefers small to medium-sized upland streams with clear water over rocky bottoms of pools and riffles.

## GOLDEN SHINER

*(Notemigonus crysoleucas)*



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A large minnow that is deep-bodied and thin from side to side. It has a small, slightly upturned mouth, a strongly decurved lateral line, and fleshy keel along the belly. Color is olive-green on the back and silvery to brassy on the sides. The fins are light olive or yellow. Adults grow to about 12 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in sluggish water bodies, including reservoirs, oxbows, sloughs and lowland streams. The Golden Shiner is most abundant from the lower Green River westward, but its common use as a bait fish has resulted in numerous introductions throughout the state.

## BLUNTNOSE MINNOW

*(Pimephales notatus)*



Breeding male

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A small fish with a rounded snout overhanging a small, slightly downturned mouth. Other distinguishing features include scales on the back that become small and crowded just behind the head, a black spot at the base of the caudal fin, and a thin dark stripe down the side of the body. Males in breeding condition develop a darkly colored head, large tubercles on the snout, and a black spot at the front of the dorsal fin. Adults grow to about 4.5 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** One of the most common and widespread minnows in Kentucky. The Bluntnose Minnow occupies a wide variety of habitats, from small creeks to large rivers. It generally prefers warm, shallow pools and runs over rocky bottoms.

## CREEK CHUB

(*Semotilus atromaculatus*)



Breeding male

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A large minnow with a dark spot at the front base of the dorsal fin. Other distinguishing features include a broad head and large mouth that extends backward to below the front of the eye. Males in breeding condition develop rosy color along the side, orange on the fins, and large, hooked tubercles on the head. Adults grow to about 12 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** The most common minnow in headwater creeks and small to medium sized streams across the state. The Creek Chub is able to survive in isolated pools of small creeks during periods of drought, then repopulate when normal flows are restored.

## Sucker Family (Catostomidae)

Kentucky has 21 species of suckers, including one, the Harelip Sucker, which is now extinct. Most of these are large fishes that often make up the greatest biomass in streams and reservoirs throughout the state. As their name implies, suckers are adapted to feeding on the bottom with their thick fleshy lips. Some of the large river and reservoir species (e.g., the buffalofishes) are valued by commercial fishermen as food fishes. Six of the most commonly encountered species are presented below.

## WHITE SUCKER

(*Catostomus commersonii*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A slender fish with a cylindrical body and small scales behind the head that increase in size toward the tail. Color is olive or gray above with white undersides. Juveniles and immature fish have 3-4 dark blotches on the side. Males in breeding condition develop a red stripe along the side, and tubercles on the anal and

caudal fins. In Kentucky, adults grow to about 16 in. (2 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Inhabits small creeks to medium-sized streams statewide, except for minor tributaries of the Mississippi River in far western Kentucky. The White Sucker generally prefers cool, clear pools and riffles over rocky bottoms.

## NORTHERN HOG SUCKER

*(Hypentelium nigricans)*



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A slender fish with a cylindrical, tapering body, large head, and 3-5 dark saddles or bands across the back. When viewed from the front, the top of the head is flat or concave between the eyes. Adults grow to 22.5 in. (4 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** A common inhabitant of upland creeks, medium-sized streams, and rivers from the lower Tennessee River eastward, but absent from the Tradewater and lower Green River drainages. The Northern Hog Sucker prefers clear riffles, runs, and shallow pools with moderate to fast current over rocky bottoms.

## RIVER CARPSUCKER

*(Carpiodes carpio)*



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** One of three species of carpsucker found in Kentucky. The River Carpsucker has a silvery, deep body with a long, concave dorsal fin. Other distinguishing features include a first dorsal fin spine that shorter than the length of the dorsal fin base and colorless or pale gray fins. In other respects, it is similar to the other carpsuckers (i.e., Quillback and Highfin Carpsucker). Adults grow to 25 in. (10 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** A common inhabitant of pools, backwaters, and main channels of medium to large rivers and reservoirs throughout the state.

## SMALLMOUTH BUFFALO

*(Ictiobus bubalus)*



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** One of three buffalofishes found in Kentucky. Like the carpsuckers, the Smallmouth Buffalo has a deep body with a long, concave dorsal fin; however, it differs by having a dark (vs. silver or pale) body and fins. It is distinguished from the other buffalofishes (i.e., Bigmouth and Black buffalos) by having a smaller head and smaller, strongly downturned mouth. Adults grow to about 32 in. (30-40 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** A common inhabitant of pools, backwaters, and main channels of medium to large rivers and reservoirs throughout the state. Buffalofishes are also common in oxbows and floodplain lakes along the lower Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

## SPOTTED SUCKER

*(Minytrema melanops)*



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A slender fish with a cylindrical body similar to the redhorses (next page), but distinguished by having parallel rows of dark spots on the back and sides. It is further distinguished from the redhorses by having a lateral line that is incomplete or absent (vs. complete). Juveniles and immature fish have a black edge on the dorsal fin and lower lobe of the caudal fin. Adults grow to about 20 in. (3 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Inhabits deep pools of streams, rivers, and reservoirs throughout the state, except for the upper Cumberland River drainage.

## GOLDEN REDHORSE

(*Moxostoma erythrurum*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** One of six redhorse suckers that occur in Kentucky. It is distinguished from River and Smallmouth redhorses by having light gray (vs. red) dorsal and caudal fins. It differs from the Silver Redhorse by having a smaller head and shorter, slightly concave dorsal fin. It is most similar to the Black Redhorse, but differs by having a deeper, stouter caudal peduncle. Adults grow to about 30 in. (9 lbs)

**Distribution and Habitat:** The most common redhorse throughout the state, occurring in a wide range of habitat types, but usually in pools or sluggish parts of streams and rivers with clean, silt-free bottoms.

## North American Catfish Family (*Ictaluridae*)

Catfishes are easily recognized by their barbels or “whiskers” around the mouth and scaleless bodies. Kentucky has 17 species, including the White Catfish, which has been introduced. The largest portion of this family is represented by the small-sized, secretive species called madtoms. The bullheads and larger catfishes are important to anglers and commercial fishers. Catfishes have sharp senses, particularly taste and smell, which enables them to be active at night and in muddy water conditions. They also possess stout spines in the dorsal and pectoral fins, which can inflict a painful wound if handled carelessly. Six of the most commonly encountered species are presented below.

### YELLOW BULLHEAD (*Ameiurus natalis*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A medium-sized catfish with a stout body and caudal fin with a rounded or nearly straight margin. Color is olive-brown to black on the back and

sides, grading to pale yellow or white on the belly. It is most similar to the Black Bullhead, but differs by having white or pale yellow (vs. black) chin barbels and anal fin with a straight (vs. rounded) margin. Adults grow to about 18 in. (4 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common statewide in a variety of habitats, but most frequently found in pools or sluggish backwaters of streams and reservoirs over soft bottoms with accumulated debris.



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A large, heavy-bodied catfish with a deeply-forked caudal fin. Color is pale blue to gray on the back and sides, fading to white on the lower sides and belly. It is similar to the Channel Catfish, but differs by having a long, straight-edged (vs. shorter, rounded) anal fin and no dark spots on the body. Adults can grow to about 5.5 ft. (150 lbs), but individuals ranging from 20-50 in. (3-60 lbs) are most common.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs in main channels, backwaters, and embayments of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, lower reaches of their major tributaries, as well as open waters of large reservoirs. The Blue Catfish is stocked as a sport fish in several reservoirs in central and western Kentucky.



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A long, slender-bodied catfish with a deeply-forked caudal fin. Color is olive to pale gray on the back and sides, often with small black spots, and a white belly. It is similar to the Blue Catfish, but differs by having a rounded (vs. straight) anal fin margin and dark spots on the sides of the body (vs. spots absent). Adults can grow to about 4 ft. (60 lbs), but typically range from 12-32 in. (1-15 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common statewide in medium-sized streams to large rivers, but adaptable to a variety of habitats. Valued as a sport and food fish, the Channel Catfish is routinely stocked in ponds and reservoirs throughout the state.

## STONECAT

(*Noturus flavus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

rounded caudal fin margin. Color is dark grey on the back and sides, with a light spot just behind the dorsal fin, and white belly. As with other madtoms, the adipose fin is fused with the caudal fin, which distinguishes it from the bullheads and larger catfish species. Adults grow to about 12 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in the eastern half of the state, where it inhabits swift, rocky riffles of streams and rivers.

## BRINDLED MADTOM

(*Noturus miurus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

with 3-4 dark saddles or bands crossing the back, a black spot near the tip of the dorsal fin, and dark blotch passing through the adipose fin. The adipose fin is fused with the caudal fin. Adults grow to about 5 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs throughout the state, primarily in small to medium-sized streams in soft-bottomed pools among rocks and woody debris (e.g., sticks, leaves, and tree roots).

## FLATHEAD CATFISH

(*Pylodictis olivaris*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A large, slender-bodied catfish with a broad, flattened head and projecting lower jaw. Color is yellow to brown, with dark brown and black mottling on the back and sides, fading to pale yellow or white on the belly. A white tip on the upper lobe of the caudal fin is usually visible, except in very large fish. Adults can grow to at least 5 ft. (120 lbs), but individuals ranging from 15-50 in. (1-60 lbs) are most common.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common statewide in sluggish streams, rivers, and reservoirs. Adults occupy deep pools around fallen timber, brush piles, and other debris. Juveniles and smaller individuals occur in swift, shallow areas (e.g., riffles) over rocky or firm sand bottoms.



## Trout Family (Salmonidae)

Six species of trout occur or have been reported from Kentucky waters. None of these fish are native to the state and optimal environmental conditions for their survival are marginal. One species, the Lake Trout, has been stocked in Dale Hollow Lake and Lake Cumberland, but its continued existence in these reservoirs is uncertain. Coho Salmon have been reported from the Ohio River, but is not an established resident. Cutthroat Trout were recently stocked in the Cumberland River below Wolf Creek Dam. The three remaining species (detailed below) are popular sport fish and may be found in suitable waters that are stocked. Rainbow Trout occasionally reproduce in the wild and there are a few small naturally reproducing populations of Brook Trout in the eastern half of the state. All trout in Kentucky have a streamlined body with small scales, a large mouth, and an adipose fin. Juveniles have a series of vertical oval-shaped dark bars along the side called parr marks.



*Rick Hill / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

### RAINBOW TROUT

*(Oncorhynchus mykiss)*

↑ **Identification:** The Rainbow Trout has a streamlined body, an adipose fin, and large mouth with an upper jaw that barely extends beyond the rear margin of the eye. It is distinguished from Brown and Brook Trout by having many small black spots on the caudal fin and on the back and sides. Adults have a broad pink to red stripe along the side. Rainbow Trout usually reach 12-14 in. and less than 1 lb in small to medium streams, but may attain larger sizes (over 10 lbs) in rivers and tailwaters of reservoirs.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Native to drainages of the Pacific Coast, the Rainbow Trout is stocked as a sport fish in the coolest creeks, streams, rivers, and reservoirs across the state.



*Rick Hill / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

### BROWN TROUT (*Salmo trutta*)

↑ **Identification:** The Brown Trout has a streamlined body, but slightly deeper than

Rainbow Trout. The mouth is large and the upper jaw extends beyond the rear margin of the eye. It is distinguished from Rainbow Trout by having fewer and larger black spots on the back, and red mixed with black spots surrounded by pale halos on the sides. It differs from Brook Trout by having dark round spots on a lighter colored body (vs. light worm-like spots on a darker colored body). The Brown Trout is the largest of the three trouts in Kentucky, reaching weights of more than 20 lbs in larger streams and rivers.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Native to Europe and western Asia, the Brown Trout is stocked as a sport fish in cool, upland creeks, streams, and rivers in the eastern two-thirds of the state. It is stocked in far fewer locations than the Rainbow Trout.



*Rick Hill / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

## **BROOK TROUT**

*(Salvelinus fontinalis)*

↑ **Identification:** The Brook Trout has a deeper body than Rainbow or Brown Trout, especially in the largest adults. The mouth is large and the upper jaw extends well beyond the rear margin of the eye. It is distinguished from Rainbow and Brown Trout by having pale worm-like markings on a dark colored back and white leading edges of the lower fins. Breeding males develop bright orange-red with black color on the belly and lower fins. Adults usually range from 10-16 in. and 1-2 lbs.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Native to the Appalachian uplands east of the Cumberland Plateau, particularly the Blue Ridge from northern Georgia to Maryland. Brook Trout have been introduced into a few small, high-quality forested streams on the Cumberland Plateau of eastern Kentucky where they persist through limited natural reproduction.

## *Pike Family* (Esocidae)

This family is represented by five species in Kentucky, one of which, the Northern Pike, has been introduced. Except for the Central Mudminnow, pikes are easily recognized by their long, slender bodies, “duckbill-like” snout, and jaws with many large, sharp teeth. All are predators feeding on other fish using ambush or “lie-in-wait” tactics. In certain parts of Kentucky, the Muskellunge is a popular sport fish because of its large size and willingness to take artificial lures. The Northern Pike and Chain Pickerel, while popular as sport fish in other states, are rare in Kentucky. The two most common species, the Grass Pickerel and Muskellunge, are presented here.

## GRASS PICKEREL



(*Esox americanus*)

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** An elongate fish with a duck-like snout and large mouth with sharp canine teeth. The dorsal fin is far back on the body. Color is dark olive on the back with dark green to brown wavy bars along the side, and a black vertical stripe below the eye. Adults grow to 15 in. (about 1 lb.)

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in the western half of the state, but also occasionally encountered in the eastern half. Grass Pickerel inhabit primarily sluggish streams and densely vegetated sloughs, ditches, ponds, and lakes.

## MUSKELLUNGE (*Esox masquinongy*)



adult

John MacGregor / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

immature



David Eisenhour / Morehead State University

↑ **Identification:** The Muskellunge has a general body shape and appearance that is similar to the Grass Pickerel, but grows to a much larger size. It is further distinguished from the Grass Pickerel by lacking a vertical black stripe below the eye. Color is dark green or brown on the back and silvery on the sides with dark broken vertical bars (faded in adults). Fins are olive to reddish-brown, often with large dark spots. Adults from northern populations are reported to reach 6 ft (72 in.) and 70 lbs. In Kentucky, individuals exceeding 50 in. (40 lbs) are uncommon.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Native to the Green, Kentucky, Licking, and Little Sandy river drainages, and Kinniconick and Tygarts creeks. The Muskellunge inhabits pools of medium to large rivers, often near fallen logs with accumulated debris. Fish are stocked annually in Green River, Cave Run, and Buckhorn lakes, where they are usually found in shoreline habitat associated with structure. Several stream populations are also maintained through supplemental stockings due to poor reproductive success in the wild.

## Silverside Family (Atherinopsidae)

Two species of silverside occur in Kentucky, both of which are small, slender fish that occupy open water habitats. Schools of silversides are often seen “skipping” across the surface of the water, especially when chased by a predator. The Brook Silverside (below) occurs statewide and can be abundant in rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. It is an important forage species for larger predatory fish. The Mississippi Silverside (not shown) is far less common and occurs west of the Land Between the Lakes in western Kentucky.

### BROOK SILVERSIDE



(*Labidesthes sicculus*)

breeding male

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A long and very slender fish with a flattened head, pointed beak-like snout, and translucent body. It has two dorsal fins and a long anal fin. The first dorsal fin is small and inconspicuous, but with a black tip in breeding males. Color on the back is translucent green with a bright silver stripe along the side. The Brook Silverside is similar to the Mississippi Silverside (*Menidia audens*), but differs by having a longer, more pointed snout (vs. blunt) and small (vs. large) scales on the body. Both species grow to about 5.5 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common statewide in open waters of pools, coves, and backwaters of warm streams, rivers, reservoirs, and lakes.

## Topminnow Family (Fundulidae)

Six species of topminnows, also known as killifish, occur in Kentucky. These small fish are usually seen swimming just beneath the surface of calm backwaters, often around aquatic vegetation. Topminnows have a flattened head and back, up-turned mouth and dorsal fin far back on the body. The three most common species are presented below.

### NORTHERN STUDFISH



(*Fundulus catenatus*)

breeding male

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

◆ **Identification:** A small fish with a large head and rows of small brown dots forming horizontal lines down the side. Breeding males have bright blue on the sides with reddish-brown streaks, red spots on the head and fins, and often an orange margin and black submarginal band on the caudal fin. Adults grow to 7 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs in the upper Barren, upper Green, and middle Cumberland River (below the Falls) drainages of south-central Kentucky. The Northern Studfish can be abundant in shallow pools and slackwater margins of streams and rivers, often near stands of water willow.

## BLACKSTRIPE TOPMINNOW



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

◆ **Identification:** A small, slender topminnow with a wide blue-black stripe along the entire length of the body from the snout to the caudal fin; the black stripe is solid in females and irregular in males. Small dark spots are often present on the body above the lateral stripe, and on the dorsal, anal, and caudal fins; however, the lateral stripe is usually darker and more intense than the spots. A white spot on top of the head is visible on fish observed swimming just beneath the water surface. Adults grow to 3 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in the lower Green, Salt, and Kentucky River drainages; present, but less common in the upper Green, Barren, Licking, and Cumberland (below Wolf Creek Dam) river drainages. The Blackstripe Topminnow occurs in a variety of habitats, but typically avoids high gradient streams with swift current. It usually frequents sluggish or slackwater areas of streams and rivers, as well as sloughs and wetlands, often near aquatic vegetation.

## BLACKSPOTTED TOPMINNOW



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

◆ **Identification:** Very similar to the Blackstripe Topminnow, but has more prominent black spots on the upper side of the body that are as dark as the lateral stripe. Hybridization is known to occur between these two species, which can further complicate identifications. Adults grow to about 3.5 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs from the Tradewater River westward. The Blackspotted Topminnow occupies lowland streams and rivers, as well as wetlands, sloughs,

ditches, and lakes. Schools are often seen near shorelines of sloughs, oxbows, and reservoirs around beds of submerged aquatic plants. Although both topminnows can occur together in the lower Ohio and Mississippi River floodplains, the Blackspotted Topminnow is more abundant and generally distributed throughout the Coastal Plain of western Kentucky.

## Livebearer Family (Poeciliidae)

The Mosquitofish is the only species in this family that occurs in Kentucky. As the family name implies, this small fish gives birth to live young rather than laying eggs. It is closely related to the topminnows and has similar features and habits. Although native to a portion of Kentucky, the Mosquitofish has been widely introduced in other areas of the state for mosquito control.



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A small surface-dwelling fish with a robust body and upturned mouth. A triangular black “teardrop” mark extends below the eye. Dorsal and caudal fins have 1-3 rows of small black spots. Males are smaller than females and have a long, slender modification of the anal fin that is used to deliver sperm to the female; fertilization is internal. Females have a large black spot on the lower side just above the anal fin origin. Adults grow to 2.5 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Abundant throughout the western one-third of the state, where it is presumed to be native. Mosquitofish inhabit shallow pools or vegetated margins of lowland streams and rivers, ditches, wetlands, sloughs, ponds, and reservoirs. Scattered occurrences throughout central and eastern Kentucky are likely the result of introductions.

## Sculpin Family (Cottidae)

Two species of sculpin occur in Kentucky, both of which inhabit upland streams having cool, clear water. Sculpins are very distinctive fish, with a large, flattened head, big mouth, and tapering, scaleless body. Despite their small size, sculpins are benthic (bottom-dwelling) predators capable of consuming prey of various sizes, including aquatic insects, crayfish, small fish, and even other sculpins!



**MOTTLED SCULPIN**  
(*Cottus bairdii*)

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A small, robust fish with a large head and mouth, large fan-shaped pectoral fins, and tapering body. Color is brown with dark brown saddles on the back, extending on to the sides as bars, which are often obscured by brown to black mottling. Males in breeding condition have a red band along the margin of the first dorsal fin with a black band at the base. In Kentucky, adults grow to about 5 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occupies rocky-bottomed riffles of clear, cool, upland headwater streams from the Kentucky River eastward. A single record is also known from the West Fork Red River in Christian County.



**BANDED SCULPIN**  
(*Cottus carolinae*)

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** Similar to the Mottled Sculpin, but with more prominent bars on the sides, which are darker at the edges and not obscured by brown to black mottling. Unlike the Mottled Sculpin, breeding males do not develop a red band at the margin of the dorsal fin with a black band at the base. Adults grow to about 7 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in spring-fed creeks and upland streams with rocky bottoms from the lower Cumberland River (Land Between the Lakes) eastward to the Kentucky River drainage. Co-occurrence with the Mottled Sculpin is uncommon in the Kentucky River and West Fork Red River (Cumberland River) drainages.

## Temperate Bass Family (Moronidae)

Four species of temperate basses occur in Kentucky, including the Striped Bass, which has been introduced as a sport fish, and White Perch, an introduced species that is expanding its distribution in the Ohio River. All species are deep-bodied and have two dorsal fins; the 1st has sharp spines and the 2nd has a single spine followed by soft rays. They are schooling predators inhabiting large bodies of water such as rivers and impoundments. Adults feed heavily on shad, silversides, and other forage fish. White Bass, Striped Bass, and their hatchery-produced hybrids are highly esteemed sport fish and are routinely stocked in rivers and large reservoirs.



**WHITE BASS**

(*Morone chrysops*)

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

◀ **Identification:** A silvery, medium-sized fish with a deep-body that is thin from side to side and strongly arched behind the head. Color is blue-gray to dark green on the back and silver-white on the sides, with dark horizontal stripes. The eye has a yellow or

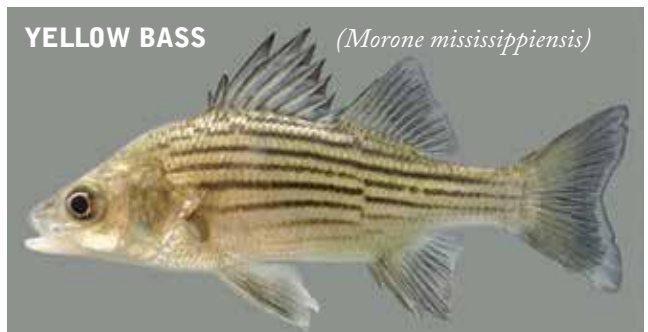
gold tint. Adults grow to 18 in. (5.5 lbs), but are commonly 10-15 in. (1-2 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occupies main channels of rivers and most major reservoirs across the state. Spring spawning runs are common in some rivers (e.g., Salt, Dix, and Big South Fork Cumberland rivers) where large numbers aggregate in flowing waters over rocky bottoms.

➔ **Identification:** Similar to White Bass, but with a brassy yellow color (vs. silver-white) on the sides, dark stripes that are broken and offset on the lower side in front of the anal fin, and two dorsal fins connected by a membrane (vs. separate).

Yellow Bass is the smallest of the three species in Kentucky, reaching a maximum length of 12-15 in. and weighing less than 2 lbs.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs primarily in the main channels of the lower Cumberland and lower Tennessee Rivers (including Kentucky and Barkley lakes), and in the Mississippi and lower Ohio rivers. The Yellow Bass has been stocked in Lake Beshear (Caldwell County) and Guist Creek Lake (Shelby County).



**YELLOW BASS**

(*Morone mississippiensis*)

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*



## STRIPED BASS

(*Morone saxatilis*)



*Rick Hill / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

### ► Identification:

A large, stream-lined fish with an olive green to blue-gray back and silver-white sides. The body is more slender than both White Bass and hybrid Striped Bass (below). Horizontal lines on the sides are more intense than on White Bass and usually extend unbroken over the entire length of the body. The base of the tongue usually has two patches of teeth (vs. a single patch in White Bass). Adults weighing 5-20 lbs are common, but may grow to over 50 lbs.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Native to Atlantic and Gulf coastal drainages, the Striped Bass is an anadromous species living in coastal saltwater habitats and migrating up freshwater rivers to spawn; however, landlocked populations can survive and grow in impounded rivers. In Kentucky, this species is maintained through stocking, which occurs only in the Ohio River and Lake Cumberland. Fish from the Ohio River often migrate up the major tributaries, especially the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers below Kentucky and Barkley lake dams. The Striped Bass is an open-water predator, often chasing smaller forage fish into shallow shoreline areas or the heads of embayments.

## HYBRID STRIPED BASS

(*Morone saxatilis* x *M. chrysops*)



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

► **Identification:** Adult Striped Bass x White Bass hybrids can be distinguished from Striped Bass by having a deeper body that is more arched behind the head (similar to White Bass). They can be distinguished from White Bass by usually having broken and poorly aligned stripes along the side. In juveniles 6 in. or less, hybrids have parr marks (elliptical blotches on the side) that are absent in White Bass. Adults seldom grow larger than 15 lbs.

**Distribution and Habitat:** In Kentucky, hybrid Striped Bass are stocked in Herrington, Barren River, Rough River, Guist Creek, Taylorsville, Linville, and Fishtrap lakes. They are also stocked in the Ohio, Kentucky, Green, and Barren rivers. These fish, as well as escapees from reservoir stockings, have produced fishable populations in several other rivers across the state.

## Sunfish Family (Centrarchidae)

The sunfish family includes some of the most popular and sought-after sport fishes in the state, such as Bluegill, Large- and Smallmouth basses, the crappies, and several other smaller species regarded as panfish. Kentucky is home to 19 species of sunfish, two of which have been introduced (Redbreast Sunfish and Redeye Bass). During late spring and into the summer, breeding males of several sunfish species become quite colorful and will aggressively defend their nests, which are saucer-shaped pits on the bottom near the margins of streams and lakes. Sunfish have a deep body that is thin from side to side and two broadly joined dorsal fins; the 1st has sharp spines and the 2nd has soft rays. Three species, referred to as the black basses, have longer bodies and are more elliptical in shape. Bass are strong swimmers that actively pursue fast prey (e.g., forage fish), which they engulf with their large mouths. Eleven of the largest and most common members of the sunfish family in Kentucky are presented below.



### ROCK BASS

*(Ambloplites rupestris)*

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A stout-bodied sunfish with a large mouth and rows of brown-black spots along the side. The upper jaw extends to below the middle of the eye. The back and upper sides are dark green or brown with brassy yellow flecks and 4-5 wide dark saddles over the back and down the sides, often having a blotchy appearance. The Rock Bass is often called "redeye" or "goggleye" in reference its large, deep red eyes. Adults grow to 17 in. (3 lbs), but fish exceeding 12 in. are rare.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Inhabits clear, upland streams and rivers throughout the eastern two-thirds of the state. The Rock Bass typically prefers silt-free pools with cover in the form of boulders, logs, undercut banks, or beds of water willow.

## GREEN SUNFISH

(*Lepomis cyanellus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

▲ **Identification:** A large, robust sunfish with a large mouth. The upper jaw extends to about the middle of the eye. A large black spot is present at the rear of the soft dorsal fin. The soft dorsal, anal, and caudal fins have yellow to orange margins. Pectoral fins are short and rounded. Adults can grow to 12 in. (2 lbs), but usually reach 8-10 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common statewide, inhabiting virtually all types of water bodies. The Green Sunfish is extremely adaptable and tolerant of extremes in turbidity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and flow. It reaches greatest abundance in small sluggish streams and ponds, usually where few other sunfish occur.

## WARMOUTH

(*Lepomis gulosus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

### ◀ **Identification:**

A medium-sized, robust sunfish with a large head and mouth. The upper jaw extends to or beyond the middle of the eye. It is distinguished from other sunfish,

including the Rock Bass, by having dark red-brown lines radiating from the back of the eye and a patch of small teeth on the tongue. Adults can grow to 12 in. (2.5 lbs), but most fish are less than 10 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs throughout most of the state except for the Big Sandy River drainage in eastern Kentucky. The Warmouth is most common from the lower Green River westward. It is most often encountered in oxbow lakes, sloughs, wetlands, and reservoirs in clear, quiet water over soft bottoms and dense stands of aquatic vegetation.

## BLUEGILL

(*Lepomis macrochirus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

◀ **Identification:** A moderately large, deep bodied sunfish with a small mouth. The upper jaw does not extend past the front of the eye. Distinguishing features include a large

back spot at the rear of the soft dorsal fin, long and pointed pectoral fins, and several evenly spaced dark vertical bars on the sides. Adults can grow to 16 in. (4.5 lbs), but usually reach 6-11 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common and abundant throughout the state. Bluegill can inhabit nearly every type of water body, avoiding only extremely polluted habitats and high-gradient headwater creeks with little pool development. Preferred habitat includes clear, quiet waters near the shorelines of ponds, reservoirs, oxbow lakes, and pools of rivers and streams.

## ➔ **Identification:**

A moderately small sunfish, with a deep body and small mouth. The upper jaw does not extend past the front of the eye. It is distinguished from other sunfish by having a long gill or "ear" flap, and wavy blue lines on the cheek and gill cover.



## LONGEAR SUNFISH

(*Lepomis megalotis*)

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

Pectoral fins are short and rounded. Brilliantly colored (especially breeding males) with bright red-orange and iridescent blue spots on the back and sides, grading to mostly red-orange on the belly. Breeding males also develop red-orange color, often streaked with iridescent blue, on the dorsal, anal, and caudal fins. Adults can grow to 9 in., but are usually less than 6 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common and abundant throughout the state. The Longear Sunfish is the most common sunfish in Kentucky streams and rivers. It generally prefers clear, quiet pools over gravel or sandy bottoms, but often occurs in large numbers along the shorelines of natural lakes (e.g., oxbows) and reservoirs.

➔ **Identification:**

A moderately large, deep bodied sunfish with relatively long, pointed snout and small mouth. The upper jaw does not extend past the front of the eye. Similar to Bluegill, but differs by hav-

**REDEAR  
SUNFISH**



*(Lepomis microlophus)*

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

ing an orange or red margin on a black gill or "ear" flap, no dark spot at the rear of the soft dorsal fin, and body without dark vertical bars evenly spaced along the sides (in adults). Adults can grow to 15 in. (4 lbs), but usually reach 8-11 in. (about 1 lb).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs sporadically statewide. Preferred habitat includes warm lowland swamps, oxbows, and sluggish backwaters or side channels of streams and rivers. The Redear Sunfish usually associates with stumps, logs, brush, and other aquatic vegetation. It is stocked in many ponds and reservoirs throughout the state.

**SMALLMOUTH BASS**



*(Micropterus dolomieu)*

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A large, slender fish with a moderately large mouth. The upper jaw does not extend past the rear margin of the eye. It is distinguished from the other black basses in Kentucky by having an olive-brown to bronze-colored body with sides either plain or marked with 10-15 faint vertical bars (vs. the broad dark stripe along the side in Largemouth and Spotted Bass). Juveniles have a 3-colored caudal fin (orange base, black middle, and white edge). The Smallmouth Bass is a very popular sport fish. Most adults are in the 10-20 in. (1-4 lbs) range, but the world angling record is 11 lbs, 15 oz., which was taken from the Kentucky portion of Dale Hollow Lake in 1955.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs in upland streams and rivers throughout the eastern two-thirds of the state, as well as several reservoirs. In streams, the Smallmouth Bass primarily inhabits cool, clear, flowing pools over rocky bottoms, often moving to the bases of riffles to feed. In reservoirs, it is usually associated with rocky shores under ledges and around stumps and other submerged cover.

## SPOTTED BASS

(*Micropterus punctulatus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** Also known as “Kentucky bass”, the Spotted Bass is most similar to the Largemouth Bass. It is distinguished from Largemouth Bass by having horizontal rows of small black spots on the lower side (vs. plain) in adults, a shallow (vs. deep) notch between the spiny and soft dorsal fins, and circular patch of teeth present (vs. absent) on the tongue. Juveniles have a 3-colored caudal fin (orange base, black middle, and white edge). Most adults are in the 10-15 in. (1-3 lbs) range, but can grow to about 24 in. (8 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common statewide, except for the Mississippi Coastal Plain of far western Kentucky. The Spotted Bass occupies primarily streams and rivers, but also occurs in lake (e.g., oxbows) and reservoir habitats. It is less numerous in reservoirs than Largemouth Bass and far less common than Smallmouth Bass in cool, clear upland streams. As with other black basses, it tends to associate with cover in the form of logs, stumps, and other submerged structures.

## LARGEMOUTH BASS

(*Micropterus salmoides*)

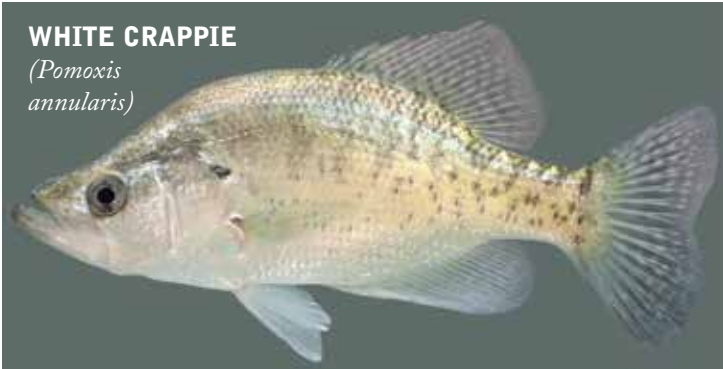


Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A large, slender fish with a large mouth. The upper jaw extends far beyond the rear margin of the eye in adults. Like the Spotted Bass, it has a broad, black stripe down the side that is often obscure or broken into a series of blotches. It differs from the Spotted Bass by having a plain lower side (vs. with rows of black spots) in adults, a deep (vs. shallow) notch between the spiny and soft dorsal fins, and tongue without a circular patch of teeth (vs. tooth patch present). Juveniles have dark band at the edge of the caudal fin, but lack the 3-colored pattern of Smallmouth and Spotted Bass. The Largemouth Bass is one of the most important warm-water sport fish in North America. In Kentucky, most adults are in the 12-20 in. (1-5 lbs) range, but can grow to at least 22 lbs.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common throughout most of the state. The Largemouth Bass occupies a variety of habitats, but tends to avoid upland headwater creeks and

small streams. It is a common inhabitant of ponds, reservoirs, backwaters, oxbows, and sloughs, where it is usually associated with shallow, vegetated areas, standing timber, stumps, and other cover. This species is widely stocked throughout the state, from private ponds to large reservoirs, as well as the Kentucky and Ohio rivers.



### WHITE CRAPPIE

(*Pomoxis annularis*)

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

#### ◀ Identification:

A silvery sunfish with a deep body that is very thin from side to side. The mouth is large and the upper jaw extends to below the middle of the eye. Color is dark olive on the back and

silver on the sides, with several dark vertical bars (often faint). The dorsal fin has 6 spines. Adults can grow to 21 in. (5 lbs), but most range from 8-15 in. (1-2 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common statewide in streams, rivers, and reservoirs. In streams and rivers, preferred habitat includes backwaters or pools around cover in the form of log jams, undercut banks, and submerged vegetation. The White Crappie is stocked throughout the state in reservoirs, where it associates with brush piles, standing timber, rock ledges, and other cover.



### BLACK CRAPPIE

(*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*)

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

#### ◀ Identification:

Similar to the White Crappie, but differs by having a shorter body between the snout and dorsal fin origin, 7-8 (vs. 6) dorsal-fin spines, and sides more boldly patterned with dark green or black speckles and blotches (vs. sides

with dark vertical bars). Adults can grow to 19 in. (6 lbs), but most range from 8-15 in. (1-2 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs statewide in streams, rivers, and reservoirs, but less common than White Crappie. Habitat requirements are similar to those of White Crappie, but less tolerant of turbid (muddy) waters. The Black Crappie tends to be more abundant in natural lakes (e.g. oxbows) and reservoirs having clearer water.

## Perch Family (Percidae)

The perches represent one of the largest families of fishes in North America and the most diverse family in Kentucky. Seventy-eight species have been recorded within the state. Members of this family range from the small, but extremely diverse and variable darters to the large Walleye and Sauger. Many darter species are intolerant of pollution and other forms of stream degradation, making them valuable ecological indicators of stream health and water quality. Walleye and Sauger form a popular sport fishery in the state. Eight of the most common members of the perch family in Kentucky are presented below.

### GREENSIDE DARTER

(*Etheostoma blennioides*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A large darter with a blunt snout and slender body having 6-7 U- or V-shaped marks along the side. Color is light olive-green to yellow overall, with scattered brownish-red spots on the upper sides. Both dorsal fins are blue-green with a red band at the base; the remaining fins are blue-green. Breeding males develop intense green to blue-green on the body and fins, and U-shaped blotches on the sides become green vertical bars. Adults grow to 6.5 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in upland streams and rivers in the eastern two-thirds of the state. The Greenside Darter typically inhabits swift-flowing, deeper sections of riffles.



RAINBOW DARTER  
(*Etheostoma caeruleum*)

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A colorful, deep-bodied darter with three dark saddles or crossbars on the back and several dark vertical bars on the side, which are most prominent



on the rear half of the fish. The bars are blue between red on males and dark brown between yellow-brown on females. Colors intensify in breeding males. The Rainbow Darter is very similar to the Orangethroat Darter (*Etheostoma spectabile*) species group, but differs primarily in having red on blue in the anal fin (vs. blue without red or clear). Adults grow to 3 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in upland headwater creeks, streams, and rivers from the Land-Between-the-Lakes area eastward, but absent from the Tradewater and much of the lower Green River basin. The Rainbow Darter is usually found in or around shallow riffles. It is generally abundant, and often the dominant darter where it occurs.



**FANTAIL DARTER**  
(*Etheostoma flabellare*)

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A slender darter with a protruding lower jaw and black bands on the caudal fin. Color is olive-brown on the back and yellow-brown on the sides, which are marked with faint vertical bars and often with thin, dark horizontal lines. The 1st dorsal fin has a black base and golden-yellow knobs on the tips of the spines. Breeding males develop a black head and bright yellow to olive-brown body. Adults grow to 3 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in upland streams and rivers from the Clarks River in western Kentucky eastward, except for the lower Green River basin. The Fantail Darter is usually associated with slower sections of shallow riffles. Like the Rainbow Darter, it is one of the most abundant darters in streams where it occurs.



**JOHNNY DARTER**  
(*Etheostoma nigrum*)

Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A small, slender darter with a small head and blunt snout. It has a straw-colored body with dark brown W- and X-shaped markings on the side. The Johnny Darter is very similar to the federally protected Cumberland Darter (*Etheostoma susanae*), and the two are difficult to distinguish without the aid of a microscope.

Adults grow to 3 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in the eastern half of the state, but sporadic in the western half. The Johnny Darter occurs in a wide variety of habitat types, but tends to be most abundant in shallow sections of streams with gentle current over bedrock, sand, and silt bottoms. The endangered Cumberland Darter is limited to a small area of the upper Cumberland River drainage immediately above Cumberland Falls. The Johnny Darter is extremely rare in the Cumberland River drainage and does not co-exist with the Cumberland Darter.

## BANDED DARTER

*(Etheostoma zonale)*



*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A moderately slender darter with a blunt snout. It has a yellow-green body with several dark green vertical bands on the side. Both dorsal fins have a red band along the base; the 1st dorsal fin has a green marginal band. Breeding males develop brilliant green vertical bands that completely encircle the body. Adults grow to 3 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs in the eastern two-thirds of the state, mostly in larger streams and rivers. The Banded Darter usually occupies deeper, mid-channel sections of riffles in swift current.



## LOGPERCH

*(Percina caprodes)*

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A large, slender darter easily recognized by its long, bulbous snout. The body is marked by many narrow, vertical bars or stripes on the side. A distinct dark spot is visible at the base of the caudal fin. Adults grow to 7 in.

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common in streams and rivers from the Clarks River in western Kentucky eastward. The Logperch usually occupies deep sections of riffles in moderate current, or in sluggish pools over gravel and sand bottoms.

## SAUGER

(*Sander canadensis*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A slender, streamlined perch similar to the Walleye (below), but reaches a smaller adult size. It is distinguished from the Walleye by having at least 3 rows of rounded black spots in the 1st dorsal fin (vs. streaks or wavy lines), 3-4 dark brown saddles on the back with 2 large dark brown blotches on the side (vs. several smaller blotches on the back and side), and no white tips on the fins (vs. white tips on the anal fin and lower lobe of the caudal fin). Adults can grow to 30 in. (8-9 lbs), but are usually less than 20 in. (2-3 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs in most of the large rivers statewide, including the main channels of the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, their major tributaries, as well as Kentucky, Barkley, and Cumberland lakes. Sauger and Walleye occupy similar habitats, but Sauger tend to be more tolerant of turbid (muddy) water conditions. Sauger are often taken by anglers during early spring spawning runs, when they congregate near swift shoals, near the mouths of streams, or in tailwaters of dams.

## WALLEYE

(*Sander vitreus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

↑ **Identification:** A large, streamlined perch with an opaque eye, large mouth, and enlarged canine teeth. The upper jaw extends beyond the middle of the eye. Color is olive-green to brown with darker blotches on the back and side. The 1st dorsal fin has dark streaks or wavy bands, and a black blotch covering the membranes of the last few spines. The anal fin and lower lobe of the caudal fin are tipped in white. Adults can grow to 36 in. (25 lbs), but usually range from 12-30 in. (2-10 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Occurs in most of the large rivers statewide, but most common in the Cumberland River drainage, including the Big South Fork and Rockcastle River. Several reservoirs across the state are stocked with a Lake Erie strain, but efforts are also underway by Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources to restore a native river-adapted strain to free-flowing sections of selected river systems. Walleye often occur in deep pools of rivers or open waters of reservoirs with abundant bottom cover. They will also congregate below dams or near rocky shoals in rivers.

## Drum Family (Scienidae)

Members of this family are largely marine or brackish water fishes. The Freshwater Drum is the only species in North America that occurs strictly in freshwater habitats, including rivers, lakes, and reservoirs in Kentucky. The common name “drum” refers to the deep sounds that resonate from special muscles vibrating against the swim bladder. Drums are bottom-oriented and feed heavily on mollusks, crustaceans, and other small invertebrates. The Freshwater Drum, sometimes called “sheepshead” or “white perch” reaches a large adult size and has some value in sport and commercial fisheries of large rivers and reservoirs.



**FRESHWATER DRUM**  
*(Aplodinotus grunniens)*

*Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources*

↑ **Identification:** A large, silvery, and deep-bodied fish with a short 1st dorsal fin and long 2nd dorsal fin. The body is steeply arched from the snout to the dorsal fin origin, giving it a “humpbacked” appearance. The lateral line extends onto the caudal fin, which has a pointed to rounded margin. Adults can grow to 37 in. (nearly 60 lbs), but usually range from 12-20 in. (1-5 lbs).

**Distribution and Habitat:** Common statewide in medium-sized streams to large rivers and reservoirs. The Freshwater Drum is a bottom-feeder and usually occupies sluggish pools and backwaters of rivers, and deep, open waters of reservoirs.

## Potential Invaders

The Blueback Herring and Snakehead are currently not known to occur in Kentucky, but could become established if introduced. State law prohibits the sale, possession, or release of these exotic (non-native) species into the waters of the Commonwealth. Their introduction, regardless of whether it is accidental or intentional, could have severe impacts to local fish populations and other native aquatic organisms.

### BLUEBACK HERRING

(*Alosa aestivalis*)



Fritz Rohde / NOAA Fisheries Service

▲ **Identification:** The Blueback Herring is similar to the Alewife, but differs by having a larger eye, bluish sheen (vs. gray-green) on the back and upper sides, and black (vs. pale gray) lining on the inside of the body cavity (observed through dissection). Both the Blueback Herring and Alewife differ from the Skipjack Herring (p. 11) by having a round black spot behind the gill cover (vs. spot absent). They differ from Gizzard and Threadfin shads (p. 11), by lacking a whip-like last dorsal-fin ray.

**Remarks:** Both the Blueback Herring and Alewife are native to the Atlantic Coast, but have been introduced elsewhere as bait fish for Striped Bass and hybrid Striped Bass. In Kentucky, the Alewife is already established in some reservoirs and there are unconfirmed reports of Blueback Herring being used for bait. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources is working to prevent the introduction of Blueback Herring and further spread of Alewives in the state. Research has shown that both species can harm other sport fish by consuming their eggs and fry.

### ALEWIFE (*Alosa pseudoharengus*)



Matthew Thomas / Ky. Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources

## SNAKEHEADS (species in the genus *Channa*)



**NORTHERN  
SNAKEHEAD**

(*Channa argus*)

*U.S. Geological Survey*

↑ **Identification:** A long, slender fish with a single dorsal fin running the length of the body. Snakeheads are similar to the native Bowfin (p. 8 and below), but differ by having a long anal fin (vs. short anal fin), pelvic fins close to level with pectoral fins (vs. set lower on the abdomen), and no black spot on the upper base of the tail (vs. black spot present).

**Remarks:** Snakeheads are large, predatory fishes native to China, Russia, and Korea. Introductions in the U.S. have been linked to their popularity in Asian food markets and the ornamental fish trade. At present, one species (Northern Snakehead, *Channa argus*) is established in Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York. Recent evidence of an established population in Arkansas indicates the potential for this species to disperse throughout the Mississippi River basin, if left uncontrolled.



**BOWFIN** (*Amia calva*)

*Fritz Robde / NOAA Fisheries Service*



# Checklist of Kentucky Fishes

Listed below are 269 fish species known to occur or to have occurred in Kentucky waters, including 24 that have been introduced (I). The remaining 245 species are considered native, seven of which are protected by federal law either as Threatened (FT) or Endangered (FE), six are thought to no longer exist within the state (XP), but still exist elsewhere in the wild, and one is extinct (X). Updated 26 April 2021.

## Family Petromyzontidae (Northern Lampreys)

- Ichthyomyzon bdellium* ..... Ohio Lamprey
- Ichthyomyzon castaneus* ..... Chestnut Lamprey
- Ichthyomyzon fossor* ..... Northern Brook Lamprey
- Ichthyomyzon gagei* ..... Southern Brook Lamprey
- Ichthyomyzon greeleyi* ..... Mountain Brook Lamprey
- Ichthyomyzon unicuspis* ..... Silver Lamprey
- Lampetra aepyptera* ..... Least Brook Lamprey
- Lethenteron appendix* ..... American Brook Lamprey

## Family Acipenseridae (Sturgeons)

- Acipenser fulvescens* ..... Lake Sturgeon
- Scaphirhynchus albus* ..... Pallid Sturgeon (FE)
- Scaphirhynchus platyrhynchus* ..... Shovelnose Sturgeon

## Family Polyodontidae (Paddlefishes)

- Polyodon spathula* ..... Paddlefish

## Family Lepisosteidae (Gars)

- Atractosteus spatula* ..... Alligator Gar
- Lepisosteus oculatus* ..... Spotted Gar
- Lepisosteus osseus* ..... Longnose Gar
- Lepisosteus platostomus* ..... Shortnose Gar

## Family Amiidae (Bowfins)

- Amia calva* ..... Bowfin

## Family Hiodontidae (Mooneyes)

- Hiodon alosoides* ..... Goldeye

- Hiodon tergisus* ..... Mooneye

## Family Anguillidae (Freshwater Eels)

- Anguilla rostrata* ..... American Eel

## Family Clupeidae (Herrings and Shads)

- Alosa alabamae* ..... Alabama Shad
- Alosa chrysochloris* ..... Skipjack Herring
- Alosa pseudoharengus* ..... Alewife (I)
- Dorosoma cepedianum* ..... Gizzard Shad
- Dorosoma petenense* ..... Threadfin Shad

## Family Cyprinidae (Carp and Minnows)

- Campostoma anomalum* ..... Ohio Stoneroller
- Campostoma oligolepis* ..... Largescale Stoneroller
- Campostoma pullum* ..... Central Stoneroller
- Carassius auratus* ..... Goldfish (I)
- Chrosomus cumberlandensis* ..... Blackside Dace (FT)
- Chrosomus erythrogaster* ..... Southern Redbelly Dace
- Chrosomus oreas* ..... Mountain Redbelly Dace (I)
- Clinostomus elongatus* ..... Redside Dace
- Clinostomus funduloides* ..... Rosyside Dace
- Ctenopharyngodon idella* ..... Grass Carp (I)
- Cyprinella camura* ..... Bluntnose Shiner
- Cyprinella galactura* ..... Whitetail Shiner
- Cyprinella lutrensis* ..... Red Shiner
- Cyprinella spiloptera* ..... Spotfin Shiner
- Cyprinella venusta* ..... Blacktail Shiner
- Cyprinella whipplei* ..... Steelcolor Shiner
- Cyprinus carpio* ..... Common Carp (I)
- Erimystax dissimilis* ..... Streamline Chub
- Erimystax insignis* ..... Blotched Chub
- Erimystax x-punctatus* ..... Gravel Chub (XP)
- Hemitremia flammea* ..... Flame Chub

- Hybognathus hayi* ..... Cypress Minnow
  - Hybognathus nuchalis*..... Mississippi Silvery Minnow
  - Hybognathus placitus* ..... Plains Minnow
  - Hybopsis amblops* ..... Bigeye Chub
  - Hybopsis amnis* ..... Pallid Shiner
  - Hypophthalmichthys molitrix* ... Silver Carp (I)
  - Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*.. Bighead Carp (I)
  - Luxilus chrysocephalus*..... Striped Shiner
  - Lythrurus fasciolaris*..... Scarlet Shiner
  - Lythrurus fumeus*..... Ribbon Shiner
  - Lythrurus umbratilis*..... Redfin Shiner
  - Macrhybopsis gelida* ..... Sturgeon Chub
  - Macrhybopsis hystoma*..... Shoal Chub
  - Macrhybopsis meeki*..... Sicklefin Chub
  - Macrhybopsis storeriana*..... Silver Chub
  - Mylopharyngodon piceus* ..... Black Carp (I)
  - Nocomis biguttatus*..... Hornyhead Chub
  - Nocomis effusus* ..... Redtail Chub
  - Nocomis micropogon* ..... River Chub
  - Notemigonus crysoleucas* ..... Golden Shiner
  - Notropis albizonatus*..... Palezone Shiner (FE)
  - Notropis ariommus*..... Popeye Shiner
  - Notropis atherinoides*..... Emerald Shiner
  - Notropis blennioides*..... River Shiner
  - Notropis boops*..... Bigeye Shiner
  - Notropis buccatus* ..... Silverjaw Minnow
  - Notropis buchmanii*..... Ghost Shiner
  - Notropis dorsalis* ..... Bigmouth Shiner
  - Notropis hudsonius*..... Spottail Shiner
  - Notropis leuciodus* ..... Tennessee Shiner
  - Notropis maculatus*..... Taillight Shiner
  - Notropis micropteryx*..... Highland Shiner
  - Notropis nilobilis*..... Ozark Minnow
  - Notropis photogenis*..... Silver Shiner
  - Notropis rubellus*..... Rosyface Shiner
  - Notropis shumardi* ..... Silverband Shiner
  - Notropis stramineus* ..... Sand Shiner
  - Notropis telescopus*..... Telescope Shiner
  - Notropis volucellus* ..... Mimic Shiner
  - Notropis wickliffi* ..... Channel Shiner
  - Notropis* sp. cf. *spectrunculus*..... Sawfin Shiner
  - Opsopoeodus emiliae*..... Pugnose Minnow
  - Phenacobius mirabilis*... Sucker-mouth Minnow
  - Phenacobius uranops*..... Stargazing Minnow
  - Pimephales notatus*..... Bluntnose Minnow
  - Pimephales promelas*..... Fathead Minnow
  - Pimephales vigilax*..... Bullhead Minnow
  - Platygobio gracilis*..... Flathead Chub
  - Rhinichthys cataractae*..... Longnose Dace (I)
  - Rhinichthys obtusus*.. Western Blacknose Dace
  - Semotilus atromaculatus*..... Creek Chub
- Family Catostomidae (Suckers)**
- Carpiodes carpio*..... River Carpsucker
  - Carpiodes cyprinus*..... Quillback
  - Carpiodes velifer*..... Highfin Carpsucker
  - Catostomus commersonii* ..... White Sucker
  - Cycleptus elongatus*..... Blue Sucker
  - Erimyzon claviformis*..... Western Creek Chubsucker
  - Erimyzon sucetta*..... Lake Chubsucker
  - Hypentelium nigricans*..Northern Hog Sucker
  - Ictiobus bubalus* ..... Smallmouth Buffalo
  - Ictiobus cyprinellus*..... Bigmouth Buffalo
  - Ictiobus niger*..... Black Buffalo
  - Minytrema melanops*..... Spotted Sucker
  - Moxostoma anisurum* ..... Silver Redhorse
  - Moxostoma breviceps* ... Smallmouth Redhorse
  - Moxostoma carinatum* ..... River Redhorse
  - Moxostoma duquesnei*..... Black Redhorse
  - Moxostoma erythrurum* ..... Golden Redhorse
  - Moxostoma lacerum*..... Harelip Sucker (X)
  - Moxostoma poecilurum* ..... Blacktail Redhorse
  - Moxostoma valenciennesi*..... Greater Redhorse (XP)
  - Thoburnia atripinnis*..... Blackfin Sucker
- Family Ictaluridae (North American Catfishes)**
- Ameiurus catus* ..... White Catfish (I)
  - Ameiurus melas* ..... Black Bullhead
  - Ameiurus natalis* ..... Yellow Bullhead
  - Ameiurus nebulosus*..... Brown Bullhead
  - Ictalurus furcatus*..... Blue Catfish
  - Ictalurus punctatus* ..... Channel Catfish
  - Noturus elegans* ..... Elegant Madtom
  - Noturus eleutherus* ..... Mountain Madtom
  - Noturus exilis*..... Slender Madtom
  - Noturus flavus*..... Stonecat
  - Noturus gyrinus*..... Tadpole Madtom
  - Noturus hildebrandi*..... Least Madtom
  - Noturus miurus*..... Brindled Madtom
  - Noturus nocturnus*..... Freckled Madtom
  - Noturus phaeus*..... Brown Madtom
  - Noturus stigmosus*..... Northern Madtom
  - Pyloodictis olivaris* ..... Flathead Catfish
- Family Esocidae (Pikes)**
- Esox americanus*..... Grass Pickerel



- Esox lucius* ..... Northern Pike (I)
- Esox masquinongy* ..... Muskellunge
- Esox niger* ..... Chain Pickerel
- Umbra limi* ..... Central Mudminnow

### Family Osmeridae (Smelts)

- Osmerus mordax* ..... Rainbow Smelt (I)

### Family Salmonidae (Trouts)

- Oncorhynchus clarkii* ..... Cutthroat Trout (I)
- Oncorhynchus kisutch* ..... Coho Salmon (I)
- Oncorhynchus mykiss* ..... Rainbow Trout (I)
- Salmo trutta* ..... Brown Trout (I)
- Salvelinus fontinalis* ..... Brook Trout (I)
- Salvelinus namaycush* ..... Lake Trout (I)

### Family Percopsidae (Trout-Perches)

- Percopsis omiscomaycus* ..... Trout-Perch

### Family Aphredoderidae (Pirate Perch)

- Aphredoderus sayanus* ..... Pirate Perch

### Family Amblyopsidae (Cavefishes)

- Amblyopsis spelaea* ..... Northern Cavefish
- Forbesichthys agassizii* ..... Spring Cavefish
- Typhlichthys subterraneus* ..... Southern Cavefish

### Family Gadidae (Cods)

- Lota lota* ..... Burbot

### Family Mugilidae (Mulletts)

- Mugil cephalus* ..... Striped Mullet

### Family Belontiidae (Needlefishes)

- Strongylura marina* ..... Atlantic Needlefish (I)

### Family Atherinopsidae

#### (New World Silversides)

- Labidesthes sicculus* ..... Brook Silverside
- Menidia audens* ..... Mississippi Silverside

### Family Fundulidae (Topminnows)

- Fundulus catenatus* ..... Northern Studfish
- Fundulus chrysotus* ..... Golden Topminnow
- Fundulus diaphanus* ..... Banded Killifish (I)
- Fundulus dispar* ..... Starhead Topminnow
- Fundulus notatus* ..... Blackstripe Topminnow
- Fundulus olivaceus* ..... Blackspotted Topminnow

### Family Poeciliidae (Livebearers)

- Gambusia affinis* ..... Western Mosquitofish

### Family Gasterosteidae (Sticklebacks)

- Culaea inconstans* ..... Brook Stickleback (I)

### Family Cottidae (Sculpins)

- Cottus bairdii* ..... Mottled Sculpin
- Cottus carolinae* ..... Banded Sculpin

### Family Moronidae (Temperate Basses)

- Morone americana* ..... White Perch (I)
- Morone chrysops* ..... White Bass
- Morone mississippiensis* ..... Yellow Bass
- Morone saxatilis* ..... Striped Bass (I)

### Family Centrarchidae (Sunfishes)

- Ambloplites rupestris* ..... Rock Bass
- Centrarchus macropterus* ..... Flier
- Lepomis auritus* ..... Redbreast Sunfish (I)
- Lepomis cyanellus* ..... Green Sunfish
- Lepomis gibbosus* ..... Pumpkinseed
- Lepomis gulosus* ..... Warmouth
- Lepomis humilis* ..... Orangespotted Sunfish
- Lepomis macrochirus* ..... Bluegill
- Lepomis marginatus* ..... Dollar Sunfish
- Lepomis megalotis* ..... Longear Sunfish
- Lepomis microlophus* ..... Redear Sunfish
- Lepomis miniatus* ..... Redspotted Sunfish
- Lepomis symmetricus* ..... Bantam Sunfish
- Micropterus coosae* ..... Redeye Bass (I)
- Micropterus dolomieu* ..... Smallmouth Bass
- Micropterus punctulatus* ..... Spotted Bass
- Micropterus salmoides* ..... Largemouth Bass
- Pomoxis annularis* ..... White Crappie
- Pomoxis nigromaculatus* ..... Black Crappie

### Family Percidae (Perches)

- Ammocrypta clara* ..... Western Sand Darter
- Ammocrypta pellucida* ..... Eastern Sand Darter
- Ammocrypta vivax* ..... Scaly Sand Darter (XP)
- Crystallaria cincotta* ..... Diamond Darter (XP)(LE)
- Etheostoma asprigene* ..... Mud Darter
- Etheostoma baileyi* ..... Emerald Darter
- Etheostoma barbouri* ..... Teardrop Darter
- Etheostoma barrenense* ..... Splendid Darter
- Etheostoma bison* ..... Buffalo Darter
- Etheostoma blennioides* ..... Greenside Darter
- Etheostoma caeruleum* ..... Rainbow Darter

- Etheostoma chienense* ..... Relict Darter (FE)
- Etheostoma chlorosoma* ..... Bluntnose Darter
- Etheostoma crossopterum* ..... Fringed Darter
- Etheostoma derivativum* ..... Stone Darter
- Etheostoma flabellare* ..... Fantail Darter
- Etheostoma flavum* ..... Saffron Darter
- Etheostoma fusiforme* ..... Swamp Darter
- Etheostoma gore* ..... Warriote Darter
- Etheostoma gracile* ..... Slough Darter
- Etheostoma histrio* ..... Harlequin Darter
- Etheostoma jimmycarter* ..... Bluegrass Darter
- Etheostoma kantuckeense* ..... Highland Rim Darter
- Etheostoma kennicotti* ..... Stripetail Darter
- Etheostoma lawrencei* ..... Headwater Darter
- Etheostoma lemniscatum* .. Tuxedo Darter (FE)
- Etheostoma lynceum* ..... Brighteye Darter
- Etheostoma maydeni* ..... Redlips Darter
- Etheostoma microperca* ..... Least Darter (XP)
- Etheostoma nebra* ..... Buck Darter
- Etheostoma nigrum* ..... Johnny Darter
- Etheostoma obeyense* ..... Barcheck Darter
- Etheostoma occidentale* ..... Westrim Darter
- Etheostoma oophylax* ..... Guardian Darter
- Etheostoma orientale* ..... Eastrim Darter
- Etheostoma parvipinne* ..... Goldstripe Darter
- Etheostoma proeliare* ..... Cypress Darter
- Etheostoma pyrrhogaster* ..... Firebelly Darter
- Etheostoma rafinesquei* ..... Kentucky Darter
- Etheostoma sagitta* .. Cumberland Arrow Darter
- Etheostoma simoterum* ..... Snubnose Darter
- Etheostoma smithi* ..... Slabrock Darter
- Etheostoma spectabile* ..... Orangethroat Darter
- Etheostoma spilotum* .. Kentucky Arrow Darter (FT)
- Etheostoma* sp. cf. *spectabile* . Mamequit Darter
- Etheostoma* sp. cf. *spectabile* .. Sheltoewe Darter
- Etheostoma squamiceps* ..... Spottail Darter
- Etheostoma stigmaeum* ..... Speckled Darter
- Etheostoma susanae* ..... Cumberland Darter (FE)
- Etheostoma swaini* ..... Gulf Darter
- Etheostoma tecumsehi* ..... Shawnee Darter
- Etheostoma variatum* ..... Variegate Darter
- Etheostoma virgatum* ..... Striped Darter
- Etheostoma zonale* ..... Banded Darter
- Etheostoma zonistium* ..... Bandfin Darter
- Nothonotus bellus* ..... Orangefin Darter
- Nothonotus camurus* ..... Bluebreast Darter
- Nothonotus maculatus* ..... Spotted Darter
- Nothonotus microlepidus* ..... Smallscale Darter
- Nothonotus rufilineatus* ..... Redline Darter
- Nothonotus sanguifluus* ..... Bloodfin Darter
- Nothonotus tippecanoe* ..... Tippecanoe Darter
- Perca flavescens* ..... Yellow Perch
- Percina burtoni* ..... Blotchside Logperch (XP)
- Percina caprodes* ..... Logperch
- Percina copelandi* ..... Channel Darter
- Percina evides* ..... Gilt Darter
- Percina macrocephala* ..... Longhead Darter
- Percina maculata* ..... Blackside Darter
- Percina oxyrhynchus* ..... Sharpnose Darter
- Percina phoxocephala* ..... Slenderhead Darter
- Percina sciera* ..... Dusky Darter
- Percina shumardi* ..... River Darter
- Percina squamata* ..... Olive Darter
- Percina stictogaster* ..... Frecklebelly Darter
- Percina vigil* ..... Saddleback Darter
- Sander canadensis* ..... Sauger
- Sander vitreus* ..... Walleye

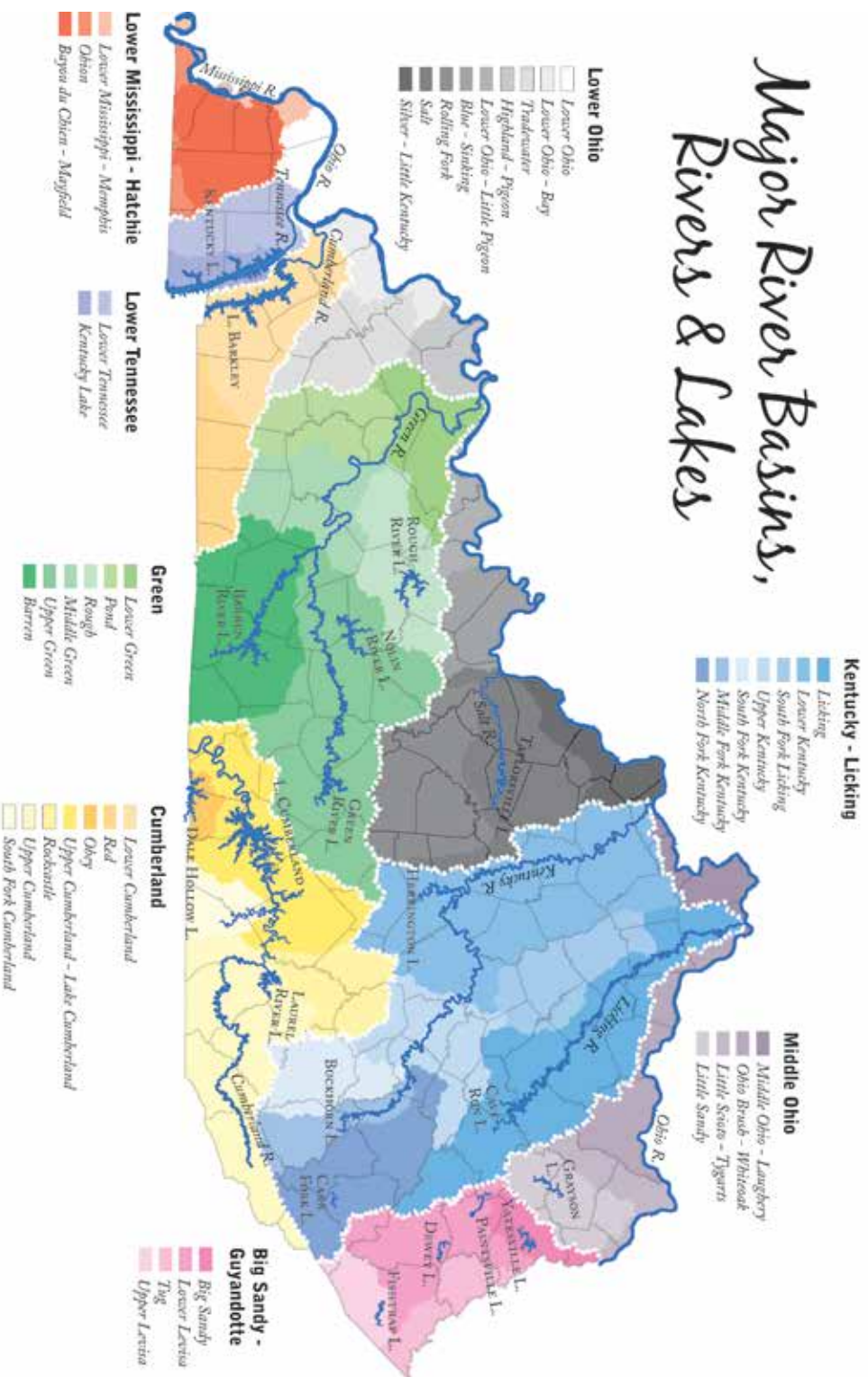
**Family Sciaenidae (Drums)**

- Aplodinotus grunniens* ..... Freshwater Drum

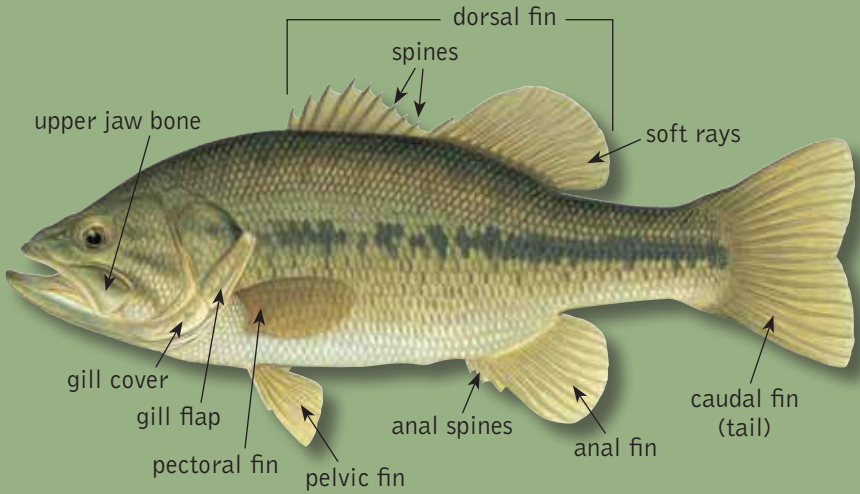
**Family Elasmomatidae (Pigmy Sunfishes)**

- Elassoma zonatum* .... Banded Pygmy Sunfish

# Major River Basins, Rivers & Lakes



## SPINY-RAYED FISH



## SOFT-RAYED FISH

