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WISCONSIN

Fishing Escape





In Wisconsin you'll find some of the best fishing in the world. Whether you're a grandparent teaching a grandchild to tempt panfish with a worm, or a bona fide muskey hunter with the most sophisticated equipment, you've come to the right place for great fishing action!

We have two Great Lakes and nearly 15,000 others that are excellent. Two thousand, four hundred and forty-four native trout streams and broad rivers challenge your fishing skills. Here you can pass on to future generations the appreciation for nature and conservation practices that are a Wisconsin tradition.

Enjoy Wisconsin safely. Know proper boating procedures and the use of personal flotation devices.

And respect the law. Grandparents must have fishing licenses too. A Wisconsin resident sixty-five years of age or older may obtain a free fishing license simply by applying for it.

Come, escape to Wisconsin's great fishing waters!

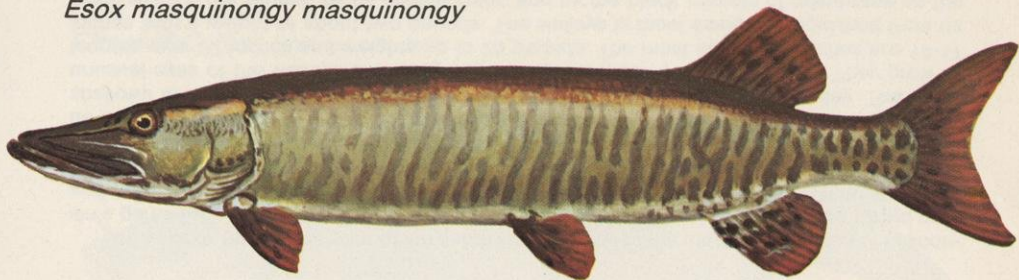
Lee Sherman Dreyfus

GOVERNOR

Wisconsin Fishing License No. 726870

MUSKELLUNGE

Esox masquinongy masquinongy

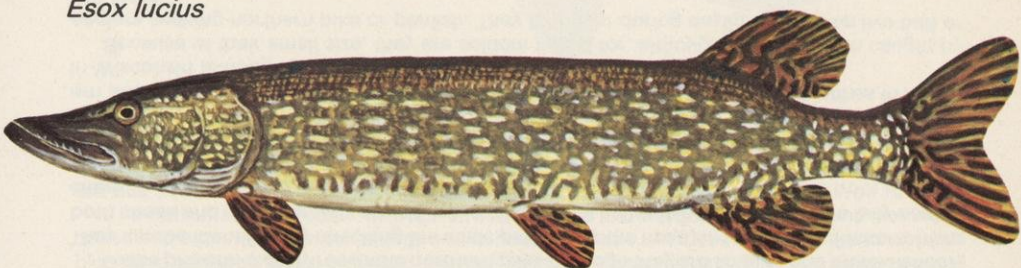


The muskellunge is the premier game fish of Wisconsin's inland waters. A lean, hard-muscled fighter noted for its leaping ability and ferocious demeanor, it reaches a maximum length of over five feet and a weight of almost 70 pounds. The muskellunge has the same body form as the northern pike and pickerel, but it is the only member of the pike family to have dark vertical bars on a light colored background which ranges from silvery green to light brown in older fish. When eggs of a female muskie are fertilized by a male northern pike, a hybrid or "Tiger" muskie results, which has light colored vertical bars on a dark background. Wisconsin has produced more record-size muskellunge than any other region.

The natural home for muskellunge is the northern lakes and rivers. It is a solitary fish and lurks in weed beds or other protective cover. Anglers usually have the best luck fishing during the daytime. Large plugs, spoons, and bucktails are the best artificial baits. A live fish bait 10-12 inches long is also good.

NORTHERN PIKE

Esox lucius



The northern pike is the second largest of Wisconsin's predator fish. One of the most consistent marks for identification of this species is coloration; a dark background marked by light colored horizontal bars. Its tooth-lined mouth admirably equips it for life as a predator, lurking in weed beds hunting for unsuspecting prey. It is most common in lakes with marshy shorelines or incoming marshy streams which provide abundant spawning grounds. Northern pike attain lengths of as much as 50 inches and the Wisconsin record fish weighed 36 pounds. A small-sized cousin known as the grass pickerel is sometimes confused with the northern pike.

Unlike other common species of game fish, northern pike are most active when the water is cool. The northern pike is quite accommodating to anglers, biting best during the daylight hours. Being a predator, northern pike prefer live fish baits, and wobbling spoons. They are a favorite target of ice fishermen with tip-ups.

GRASS PICKEREL

Esox americanus vermiculatus



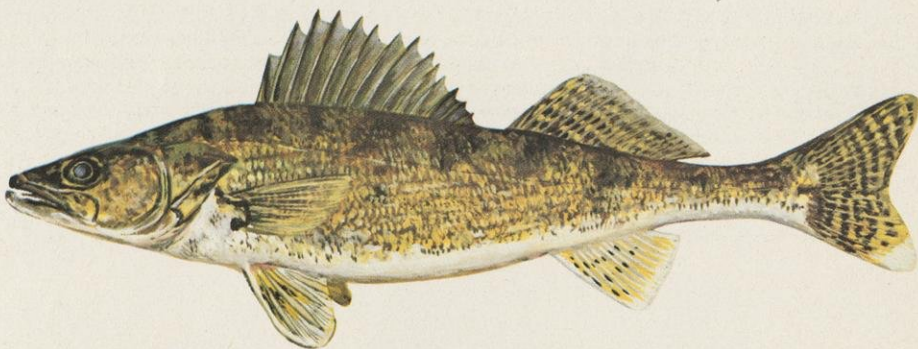
Grass pickerel closely resemble northern pike although they are smaller and more slender. They can be identified by checking the scale pattern on the head and gill cover. Pickerel have both cheek and gill cover fully scaled, while pike have a half-scaled gill cover but a fully-scaled cheek.

Like the northern pike, adult grass pickerel feed almost exclusively on fish and are found in shallow, weedy locations in lakes and rivers. They are most abundant in southeastern Wisconsin but are present in the Mississippi and Wisconsin rivers as well as scattered lakes in southern and northern areas of the state. The species seldom reach more than ten inches in length in Wisconsin although pickerel as large as 14 inches have been observed.

Because of their small size, they are seldom fished for, although they are often caught by anglers seeking northern pike or panfish. They bite best during daylight hours on live bait or fish lures.

WALLEYE

Stizostedion vitreum vitreum



The walleye, largest member of the perch family, is one of the most highly prized of Wisconsin's game fishes. It is found in clear-water northern lakes as well as large, more turbid river and lake systems including the Mississippi, Wisconsin, Wolf and the Fox. Thousands are caught each year during their spring spawning runs. Walleyes are primarily minnow feeders, but leeches, small bullheads, nightcrawlers and various small plugs, cast or trolled, are favorite baits. In clear waters, walleyes usually stay in deeper areas during the day, moving into the shallows at night. In more turbid waters, they can be caught throughout the day. The large, unusual eyes of the walleye are designed to help them easily find their prey. They grow to lengths over 37 inches and weights up to 25 pounds. The most common catches are 14-17 inches with a weight of about two pounds. The walleye is most easily distinguished from its close relative the sauger, by its golden color, and by the black triangle of membrane on the back portion of the spiny top or dorsal fin. The lower half of the tail fin has a distinguishing white tip that also helps in identification.

YELLOW PERCH

Perca flavescens



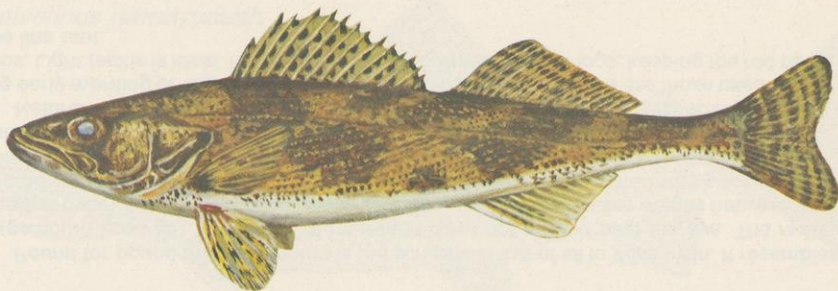
Perch are found everywhere in the state and are very popular. While smaller perch are easily caught, it takes a specialist to consistently catch large ones. The perch eats almost anything, but prefers minnows, insect larvae, plankton and worms. They are tops for eating! Larger members of the species reach a length of over 14 inches in inland waters.

The perch is primarily a bottom feeder and has a slow deliberate bite. Tackle may range from a simple handline or a fly rod in summer to a short, whippy, jigging rod in winter. Since perch prefer cool waters, the best fishing is in deep water.

Perch move about in schools, often numbering in the hundreds. If one spot is unproductive after a few tries it's best to move to other spots until a school is located.

SAUGER

Stizostedion canadense

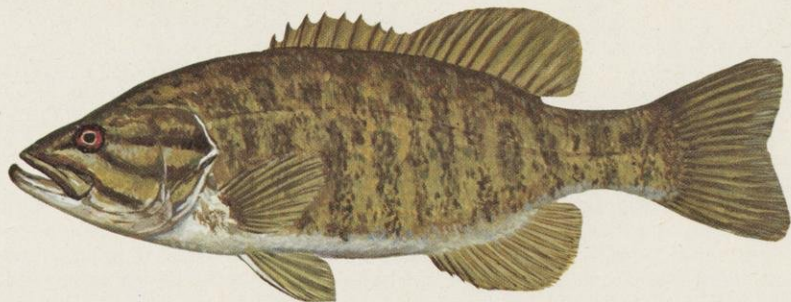


The sauger closely resembles the walleye in body shape, but coloration tends more to shades of black, rust-brown and orange. The best distinguishing mark of the sauger is the "polka-dotted" dorsal or top fin, which easily separates it from its cousin the walleye.

Saugers are usually found in silty rivers and large lakes. In Wisconsin, they are found in the Lake Winnebago-Fox River System and the Mississippi River as well as its larger tributaries. Saugers are slower-growing than walleyes and seldom reach more than 16 inches total length here in Wisconsin. Saugers are fished the same as walleyes with some of the best fishing occurring during the ice fishing season.

SMALLMOUTH BASS

Micropterus dolomieu

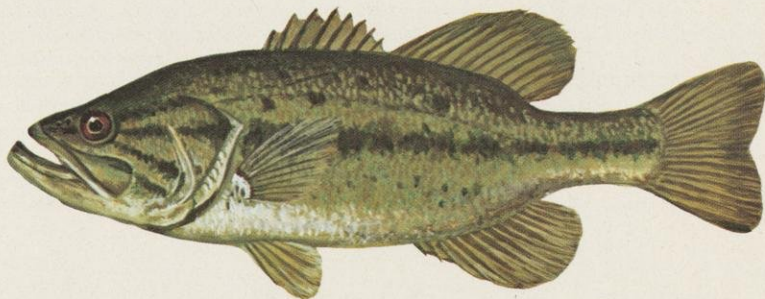


Pound for pound the smallmouth is the scrappiest fish of all in Wisconsin. It resembles the largemouth bass but the corner of its mouth does not extend past the eye. The red eye is another characteristic to look for in the smallmouth. An average fish weighs between one and two pounds and will measure about 12 inches. It is usually associated with a rocky stream or lake environment where its favorite food, the crayfish, is abundant. Some of the best lake fishing takes place in June during, and just after, the spawning season and in early fall.

Natural baits like hellgrammites, dragonfly larvae and crayfish are especially effective during early morning or late evening. Probably the best artificial baits are those used on the surface. Light tackle is ideal. Fish quietly, casting toward rocks or logs, keeping the rod tip up and the line taut.

LARGEMOUTH BASS

Micropterus salmoides

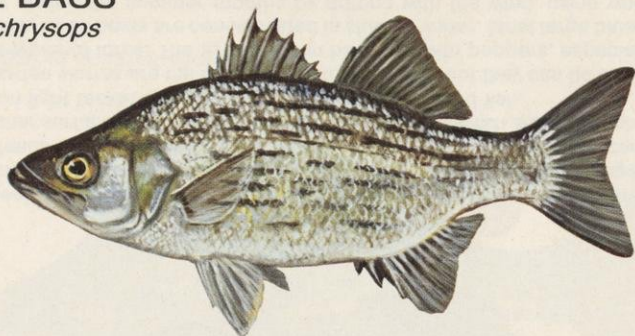


The largemouth is one of Wisconsin's more common game fish. It inhabits weedy lakes usually in association with the bluegill. This bass has a larger mouth than its cousin the smallmouth, and it takes its food in gulps as it cruises among weeds or shallows. The largemouth grows to a weight of 11 pounds and a length of about 24 inches, but the most common catches are 12-14 inches.

It will bite on almost anything. They can be caught on minnows, worms, or other live bait, plus poppers or streamers presented with a fly rod, or plugs thrown with a casting or spinning rod. Since the bass is usually associated with weeds, a weedless bait will often be necessary. Best fishing times are early morning and evening during the warm months. Bass like warm water and warm weather. Few bite in the winter.

WHITE BASS

Morone chrysops

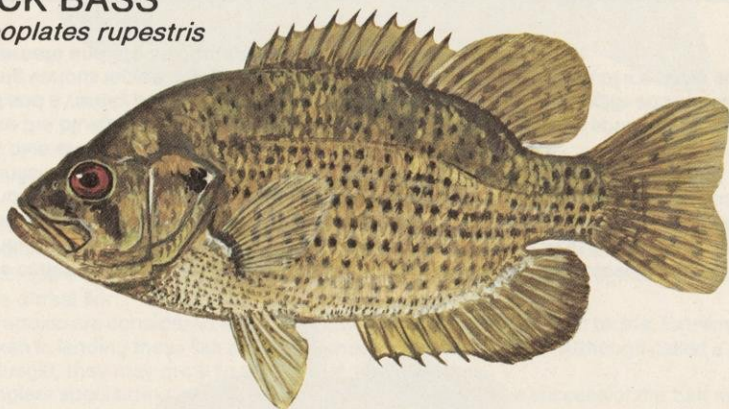


The white bass likes the open water habitat of large lakes and rivers where they migrate to spawn in spring. Large schools of white bass are often seen near the surface where they have found a large supply of animal plankton or minnows. Anglers know they can fill their stringers when white bass are in such a feeding frenzy, by casting minnows, bucktail streamers or spinners into the school.

This scrappy fish is fun to catch on gear ranging from ultra-light spinning tackle to long, whippy cane poles. During the Wolf River spawning run, anglers fish all night and the ravenously hungry white bass seem to be attracted to the light of gas lanterns. White bass reach lengths of over 17 inches, and are more abundant than their cousins, the yellow bass. They usually have seven thin black stripes along their side while the yellow bass has five or six wider darker stripes and a body tinged with yellow.

ROCK BASS

Ambloplites rupestris



Rock bass like to eat almost anything. This bronzy-colored panfish is most often associated with rocky habitat, but it is found in many other locations as well. It feeds on crayfish, minnows and insects. They grow to lengths of 12 inches and to a weight of up to 1¼ pounds. A more dingy-colored cousin found in Wisconsin is called the warmouth bass. The rock bass can be distinguished by its red eye, six spines in the anal fin and general body shape.

They may be caught in a variety of locations by anyone using any kind of bait. Worms, minnows, and poppers work well, and they have even been known to bite on a muskellunge plug.

PUMPKINSEED

Lepomis gibbosus

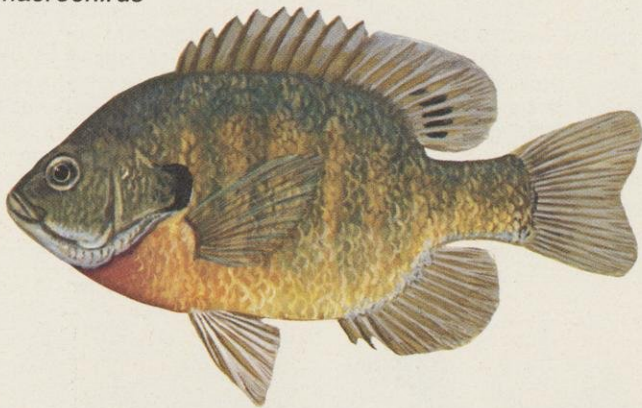


The common sunfish, or pumpkinseed, seldom reaches a size exceeding 6 to 8 inches, but its general popularity more than makes up for any deficiency in size. It inhabits most Wisconsin lakes and warm-water streams. The common sunfish is compact and beautifully colored. Perhaps no other species of freshwater fish presents more variety of colors and markings than do the sunfishes. It is distinguished by the bright orange spot on the gill cover and sometimes bright blue stripes on the cheek.

Like the bluegill, the common sunfish may provide considerable sport for the angler with a fly rod and a variety of flies. In the early part of ice fishing season bluegills and sunfish are taken by using various larvae and grubs as bait. After about the first month of ice cover sunfish seem to hibernate and are seldom taken until open water returns.

BLUEGILL

Lepomis macrochirus

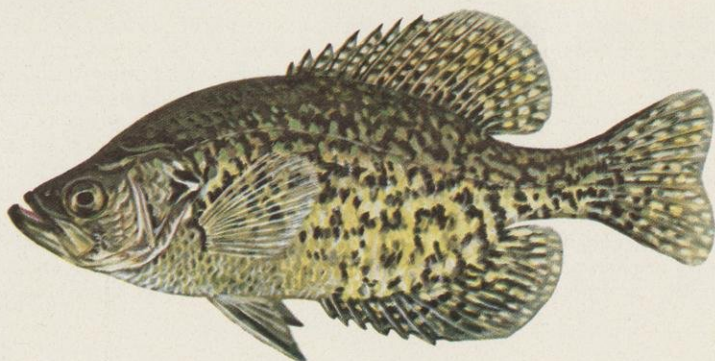


The bluegill is properly labeled a panfish for it is almost as deep as it is long. Length sometimes reaches ten to twelve inches and weights up to 2½ pounds. The bluegill inhabits weedy lakes and feeds on insects among the weeds. It has a small mouth which can suck in insects from the water surface with a resounding smack. These little fish are great fighters, offer excellent sport on light tackle and are highly respected as a food fish.

Plain garden worms are the favorite bait for bluegills, but they can be caught on a number of different types of lures. The fly fisher can have fun with poppers, especially in spring and early summer, when nests are concentrated in shallow water. Most large bluegills are taken in deep water during the summer months by drifting with the wind, using worms. Wintertime jigging in the weed beds with grubs or mousies on ice jigs also produces excellent results.

CRAPPIE

Black Crappie Pomoxis nigromaculatus



White Crappie Pomoxis annularis



The two species in Wisconsin, the black and white crappie are very similar in appearance. The black crappie is speckled and has seven or eight distinct spines on its dorsal or top fin. The white crappie has more definite bands along the side of the body, is lighter, and has six spines on the dorsal fin.

Crappies are considered excellent game fish when taken on light tackle. Extreme care must be taken in landing these fish since their mouths are very tender. Although called a panfish, like the bluegill, they may grow to a length of 18 inches.

Anglers specializing in catching crappies know that to be successful the bait must be kept constantly moving. The best baits are small minnows, small maribou covered jigs, plastic minnows or small streamer flies cast or trolled along the outer edges of weed beds. Crappies lie in weed beds in deep water during the day and bite best in early morning or toward evening. In summer, with the abundance of small fish for feed, they are more difficult to catch. Small minnows are used as bait in winter.

BROWN TROUT

Salmo trutta



Brown trout are an introduced species of European origin. They adjust to streams with a higher water temperature than our native brook trout. Extremely wary, they are found under overhanging banks, along rocky ledges and in deep pools.

Brown trout feed on a wide variety of insects, worms and other fishes. Early in the season, worms and wet flies prove most effective in taking brown trout. As the season progresses, anglers use dry flies, grasshoppers and minnows. The mayfly season, from about May 20 to June 20, is a prime dry fly period. Fishing upstream in the evening between 8 and 10 p.m. during mayfly season, while big browns noisily inhale emerging mayflies, is a thrill few trout fishermen ever forget. Try this technique any summer night using a big light-colored fly.

RAINBOW TROUT

Salmo gairdneri



The rainbow trout was introduced into Wisconsin from the West Coast. Natural populations have become established in a few spring-fed streams. A migratory run exists in Lake Superior. Elsewhere they are stocked in both streams and lakes. Rainbow trout feed principally on plankton and insects in inland waters, and forage fish in the Great Lakes. They spawn in the spring. Rainbow may be confused with coho and chinook salmon in the Great Lakes, but can be distinguished by the white interior mouth and numerous spots throughout the tail. The rosy lateral band which gives them their name is usually faint in the Great Lakes, but is prominent on fish in inland waters.

Rainbow can be caught on a variety of baits. Stream anglers catch them on worms, insects, flies or minnows. Migratory trout are most often caught on salmon eggs or metal lures, and in lakes, on nightcrawlers, worms and minnows. Fishing at night is highly productive. Anglers love the rainbow because it is less wary than the brown trout, prefers faster water, and puts up a spectacular fight.

BROOK TROUT

Salvelinus fontinalis



This brightly colored fish is Wisconsin's only native stream trout and is closely related to the lake trout. Brook or "speckled" trout feed on stream insect larvae which live on rocks, sticks and other bottom materials. This trout usually lies poised at the head of a pool, under logs or alders, waiting for an emerging insect or angler's bait to drift overhead. Approach a stream cautiously as brookies are easily spooked. They spawn in the fall, creating their nests in gravel close to spring-fed portions of a stream.

The brook trout angler loves his sport and rates this fish a prize. Fishing is best during or after a short rain. Fly fishing is advocated by many fishermen, but the trout will readily take baits such as worms, minnows and chub tails. Most brook trout caught average nine inches. The flesh is usually pink and delicious tasting.

LAKE TROUT

Salvelinus namaycush

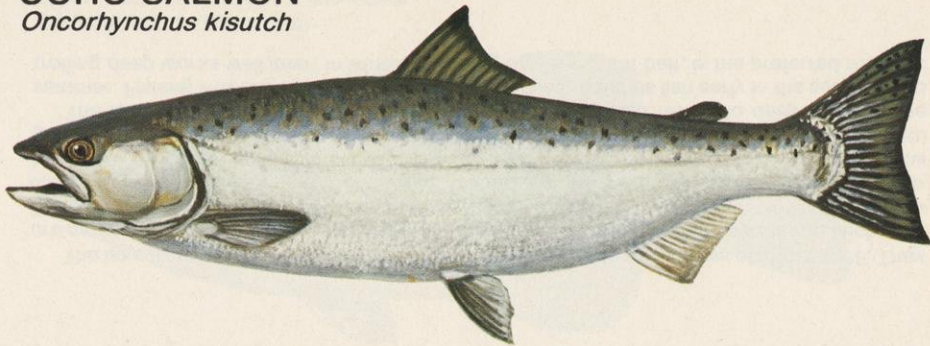


The lake trout inhabit large deep lakes, and prefer water temperatures of about 45°F. They are natural in Trout and Black Oak Lakes in Vilas County and in Lakes Superior and Michigan. They are stocked in Big Green Lake, Green Lake County. Common foods of lake trout are cisco, smelt, emerald shiners, deep water sculpin and other species common to cold, deep lakes. Lake Trout spawn in the fall on rocky bars and are not known to school. They are a slow growing fish, maturing in about seven years at which time they are about 24 inches in length.

The lake trout come into shallow water in early spring and return to deep water in the summer. Fishing with live bait, or casting in the shallows, catches fish early in the season, and trolling deep works well later. In winter, bobbing, or fishing cut bait, is the preferred method.

COHO SALMON

Oncorhynchus kisutch



The coho or silver salmon is a West Coast native, introduced into the Great Lakes in 1966. They have succeeded remarkably well and now regular stocking programs provide a continuing fishery. The silver color, indistinct spots, and whitish gums in a black mouth distinguish the coho salmon. Salmon are found almost anywhere in the open lake although they don't seem to frequent deep water.

The coho has made good use of the exceptionally abundant forage fish and fast growth is characteristic, particularly in Lake Michigan. After one year in a stream or hatchery, the fish seeks a life in the lake, normally returning for spawning two years later. Coho ascend streams in the fall to spawn. As they concentrate off spawning streams, spectacular fishing is experienced. Once spawning is finished, the adults die.

CHINOOK SALMON

Oncorhynchus tshawytscha



The chinook looks much like the coho salmon; the major distinction is an even blacker mouth without a white line along the teeth.

This species is also known as the king salmon. It is one of the largest salmon species with specimens over 40 pounds caught in Wisconsin waters. The world record is 92 pounds. They, too, have been introduced into the Great Lakes in order to produce trophy angling. Their habits are similar to other West Coast salmon. They migrate up springfed streams to spawn in the fall, then die. They provide excellent open water fishing during the summer months and an intensive nearshore fishery in the fall.

CATFISH

Channel Catfish *Ictalurus punctatus*



Flathead Catfish *Pylodictis olivaris*



Catfish are residents of rivers and lakes associated with rivers. Channel catfish have deeply forked tails and inhabit most streams in the southern half of the state. The huge flathead catfish has a rounded tail like a bullhead and is found in the Mississippi, Fox and Wolf Rivers.

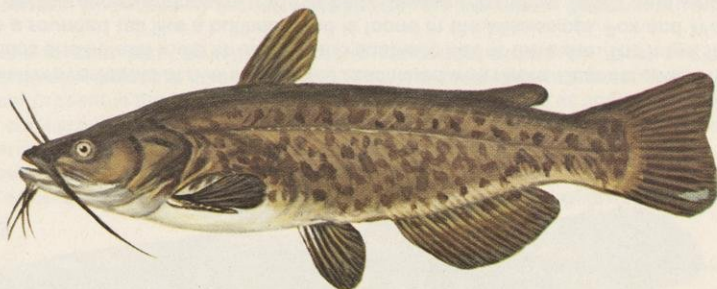
The catfish angler's stock-in-trade is bait. Cheese trimmings, rolled oats, and hot water mixed into a paste is applied to large treble hooks. Volatile additives such as anise or chicken blood are added to make a tempting morsel for hungry channel cats. A strong sense of smell makes them adept at locating edibles. Flathead catfish require live bait. Look for catfish in deep turbid pools with some current during the daytime, and on muddy shoals at night. Always fish the bottom.

BULLHEADS

Black Bullhead *Ictalurus melas*



Brown Bullhead *Ictalurus nebulosus*



Yellow Bullhead *Ictalurus natalis*



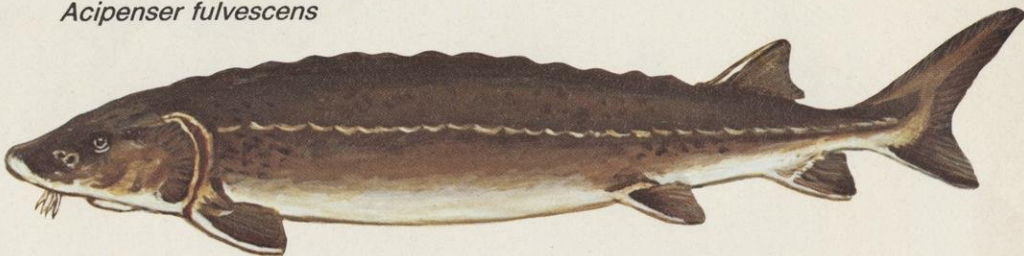
There are three species of bullheads in Wisconsin waters, the black, brown, and yellow. All have a whiskered chin, and dorsal and pectoral fins with sharp spines. They live on the bottom and average about ten inches in length.

Bullheads almost never bite during the winter months and by spring, especially near their spawning time in late April, they're hungry and ready to bite. The preferred bait is a mass of nightcrawlers placed on the bottom of a shallow bay, especially at night. Be sure to have a hook extractor or a supply of extra hooks, because the bait will invariably be swallowed. To prepare for eating, the fish is skinned. A special pair of pliers is even available for this.

Bullheads spawn in spring and the female guards the eggs and young. The brown bullhead tends to be more often associated with rock and sandy bottoms than the other species. The black bullhead is more common in muddy-bottomed areas. Bullheads can withstand warm water and low oxygen. They are often the only species that will survive in shallow, weedy lakes subject to winterkill and summerkill conditions.

LAKE STURGEON

Acipenser fulvescens



The lake sturgeon deserves special mention because of its unique life history and large size. Perhaps it should be designated "king" of Wisconsin fishes because it grows to be the largest and oldest fish living in the state. A lake sturgeon 82 years old and weighing 180 pounds was speared in Lake Winnebago during the winter of 1953.

The sturgeon is primitive in character and is easily distinguished from all other fishes by the rows of armorlike bony plates along its sides. The shovelnose sturgeon, common in the Mississippi, though somewhat similar in appearance, seldom exceeds four or five pounds.

The lake sturgeon was once common in all the Great Lakes and in most of the large lakes in northeastern United States. Sturgeon populations have been drastically reduced nearly everywhere, primarily because high dams prevent them from reaching their spawning grounds. The present population of lake sturgeon in the Lake Winnebago area remains the largest concentration in the United States today.

Sturgeon are legally taken in Wisconsin during a short winter spearing season on Lake Winnebago, and a limited hook and line season in some Wisconsin rivers.

WHITE SUCKER

Catostomus commersoni



Found in both cold and warm water streams, lakes, and ponds throughout the state, the white sucker is one of the most abundant fish in Wisconsin. As its name suggests, the mouth is adapted for sucking. The white sucker has numerous small scales, a characteristic that can help distinguish it from other suckers which have coarser scales. The flesh is firm, white and lean.

White suckers may be taken by hook and line using live bait, such as worms or nightcrawlers, and in certain areas by spear or dip net. Most sport fishing occurs on streams in deep holes, brush piles, or even in the main thread of the stream. Where permitted, dip netting and spearing are most productive during spring spawning migrations when large numbers of suckers group together.



Escape With a Record

In the "One That Didn't Get Away Department" . . . Hayward, Wisconsin is the site of the National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame. Folks there keep the official world records on freshwater fish. Drop them a line at: Box 33, Hayward, WI, 54843, before your first cast. They'll send you information on how to register your record. Qualifying requires procedures you probably haven't thought of (i.e. witnesses, wrapping the fish properly, saving the line, etc.). Before the big catch, you'll want to know how to reserve your place in history!



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