

MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF
WILDLIFE, FISHERIES, AND PARKS

FRESHWATER FISHES COMMON TO MISSISSIPPI

A FISH IDENTIFICATION GUIDE



Foreword

Mississippi's freshwater lakes, rivers, creeks, and ponds are home to an amazingly diverse fish community. Over 280 species swim in these waters, the vast majority of which are native, with the remainder being introduced, transplanted, or estuarine or marine species that commonly enter fresh water.

To help identify your catch, the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks (MDWFP) provides this fish identification guide to 39 common species. Each species is displayed in a photograph and has a description of their preferred habitat and food. Of course, state records for each species are subject to change. For updated information on all of our state record fish, visit <http://www.mdwfp.com/fishing-boating/education-outreach>.

Our waters provide exciting fishing opportunities for anglers of all ages and experience. With over 220,000 acres of water and 120,000 miles of streams, anglers have year-around places to catch a fish. To find access near you, visit <http://www.mdwfp.com/fishing-boating/ramps-piers>.

The partnership between our anglers and boaters, state and federal fish and wildlife agencies, and the fishing tackle manufacturing and boating industry is the backbone of Mississippi's fisheries and boating access programs. The continued operation of our State Fishing Lakes, fish hatcheries, fish sampling, youth fishing rodeos, and boat ramp construction projects is tied to the continued success of the Sport Fish Restoration Act. The best part is these activities and programs are funded entirely by those who enjoy them, making for a truly "user pays, everyone benefits" system. For more information about fishing licenses and requirements, visit <http://www.mdwfp.com/license>.



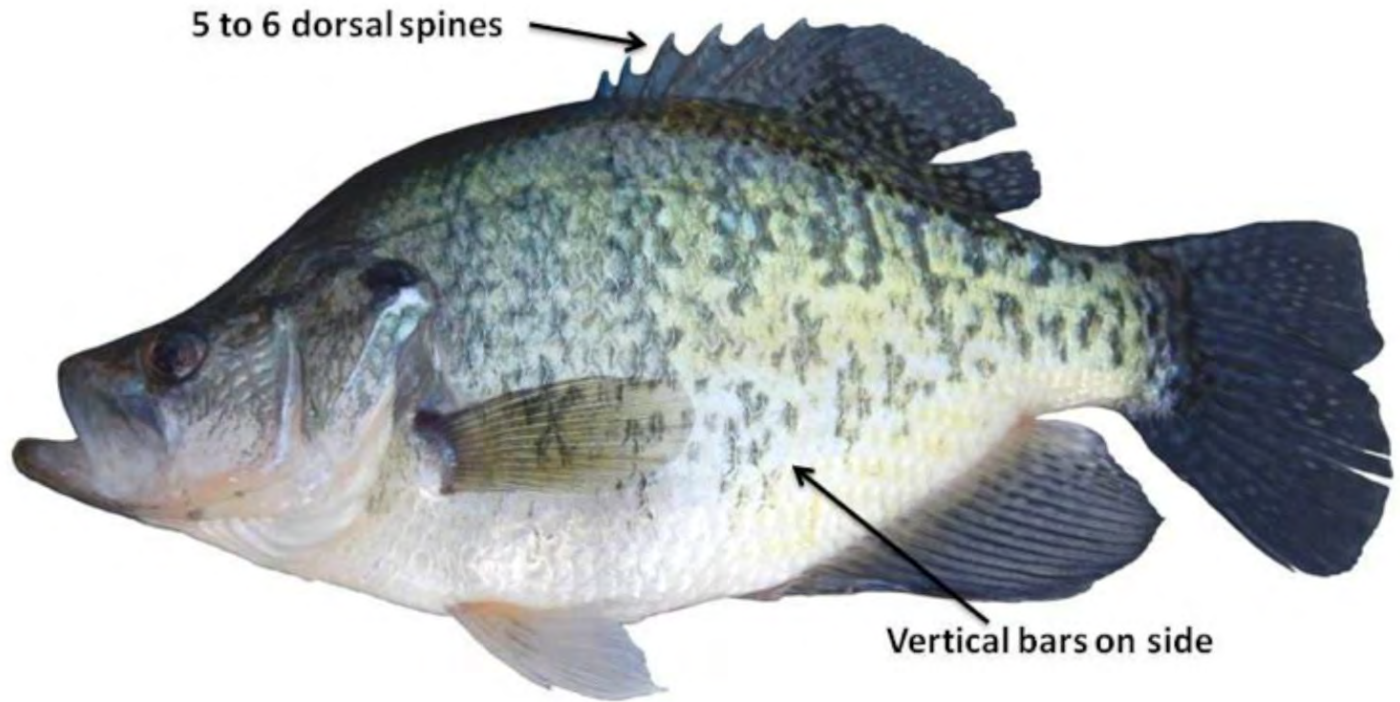
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White Crappie (*Pomoxis annularis*)



Other Names

White perch, Sac-a-lait, Slab, and Papermouth.

Description

White crappie are deep-bodied and silvery in color, ranging from silvery-white on the belly to a silvery-green or dark green on the back with possible blue reflections. There are several dark vertical bars on the sides. Males develop dark coloration on the throat and head during the spring spawning season, which can cause them to be mistaken for black crappie. White crappie have five or six spines on the dorsal fin, whereas black crappie have seven or eight spines. White crappie typically weigh 1 to 3 pounds, grow to 14 inches or more, and live up to 10 years.

Habits and Habitat

Adults feed on small fish and insects. Crappie prefer deep water near drop offs and areas of cover. White crappie can be found in many different types of habitats,

including reservoirs, oxbow lakes, and rivers. Like other members of the sunfish family, white crappie are nest builders. They produce many eggs, which can cause overpopulation, slow growth, and small sizes in small lakes and ponds. White crappie spawn from March through May when water temperatures are between 58°F and 65°F. White crappie can tolerate muddier water than black crappie.

State Record

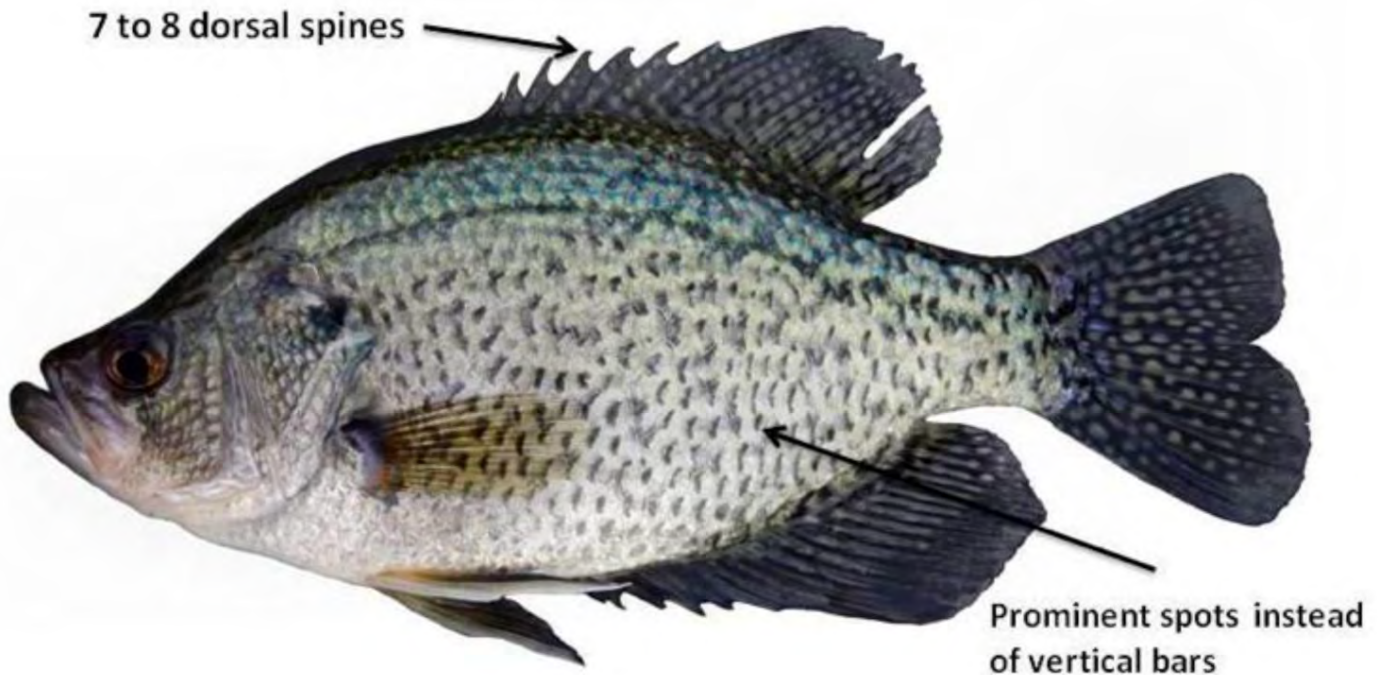
The current state and world record white crappie was caught by Fred Bright from Memphis, Tennessee in 1957 from Enid Lake; it weighed 5 pounds 3 ounces, and was 21 inches in length.

Fishing Fact

Popular baits for white crappie include jigs, small crank baits, and minnows. These fish are often found around structures, such as logs, brush piles, and cypress trees.



Black Crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*)



Other Names

White perch, Calico bass, Speck, Strawberry bass, Papermouth, Speckled perch and Slab.

Description

Black crappie are deeper bodied than the white crappie, and bluish green or gray in color on top with white or silver underneath. Irregular black spots are scattered on the body. A small percentage of black crappie in some lakes has a distinctive dark stripe running from the top (dorsal) fin to under the mouth. These “blackstripe” or “blacknose” crappie are a genetic color variation and are not a hybrid or subspecies. Black crappie have seven or eight spines on the dorsal fin, whereas white crappie have five to six spines. The black crappie is most easily confused with the white crappie, especially the white crappie males in breeding season (see White Crappie section). Black crappie weigh 1 to 3 pounds, grow to 12 inches or more, and can live up to 10 years.

Habits and Habitat

Black crappie are most active at night or in the early morning. Adults feed on insects, insect larvae, and fish, such as sunfish and minnows. Black crappie prefer shallow water lakes and sloughs and are more abundant where there is clear water and aquatic vegetation. They spawn in early spring when water temperatures are between 58°F and 65°F.

State Record

Mississippi’s Rod and Reel record is 4 pounds 4 ounces, caught in 1991 at Arkabutla Lake by Gerald Conlee.

Fishing Fact

Baits used for white crappie are also used for black crappie.



Magnolia Crappie



Prominent black stripe from dorsal fin to nose



Other Names

Blackstripe, Blacknose, Speck, Speckled perch.

Description

The Magnolia crappie is spawned in a fish hatchery and is a cross between a male black-striped black crappie and a female white crappie. The eggs are subjected to several thousand pounds of pressure resulting in the formation of three sets of chromosomes. The fish are sterile hybrids unable to reproduce.

Habits and Habitat

Habits and habitat are similar to white and black crappie.

State Record

The current state record Magnolia crappie was caught by Tom Box from Lake Charlie Capps and weighed 3.46 pounds.

Fishing Fact

Since the Magnolia crappie are sterile, triploid hybrids, they are suitable for small lakes and ponds.



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When you leave a body of water:

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- Eliminate water from equipment before transporting.
- Clean and dry anything that comes into contact with water (boats, trailers, equipment, clothing, dogs, etc.).
- Never release plants, fish or animals into a body of water unless they came out of that body of water.



Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*)



Other Names

Green trout, Bigmouth bass, Bucketmouth bass, and Hog.

Description

There are two subspecies of largemouth in Mississippi waters. The northern largemouth bass, *Micropterus salmoides salmoides*, is native to Mississippi. The Florida largemouth bass, *Micropterus salmoides floridanus*, has been introduced into many Mississippi lakes. Largemouth bass are usually green with dark blotches that form a horizontal stripe along the middle of the fish on either side. The underside ranges in color from light green to almost white. Their upper jaw extends far beyond the rear margin of the eye. Largemouth bass can reach weights greater than 10 to 15 pounds, with females growing larger and faster than males. Largemouth bass can reach lengths greater than 26 inches. Largemouth females can live up to 10 to 12 years with males living between five and seven years.

Habits and Habitat

Adults feed almost exclusively on other fish, insects, and large invertebrates such as crayfish. Largemouth

bass seek protective cover such as logs, vegetation, rocks, and even man-made structures. They prefer slow moving water but will survive in a variety of habitats including streams, rivers, lakes, and reservoirs. Spawning occurs in spring when water temperatures are from 60°F to 75°F. Males build the nests next to areas having brush piles, near underwater logs, or in areas under overhanging tree limbs. The male cares for the nest, protecting it from predators and keeping the eggs fanned until the eggs hatch. He also guards the young for a week or more after the hatch.

State Record

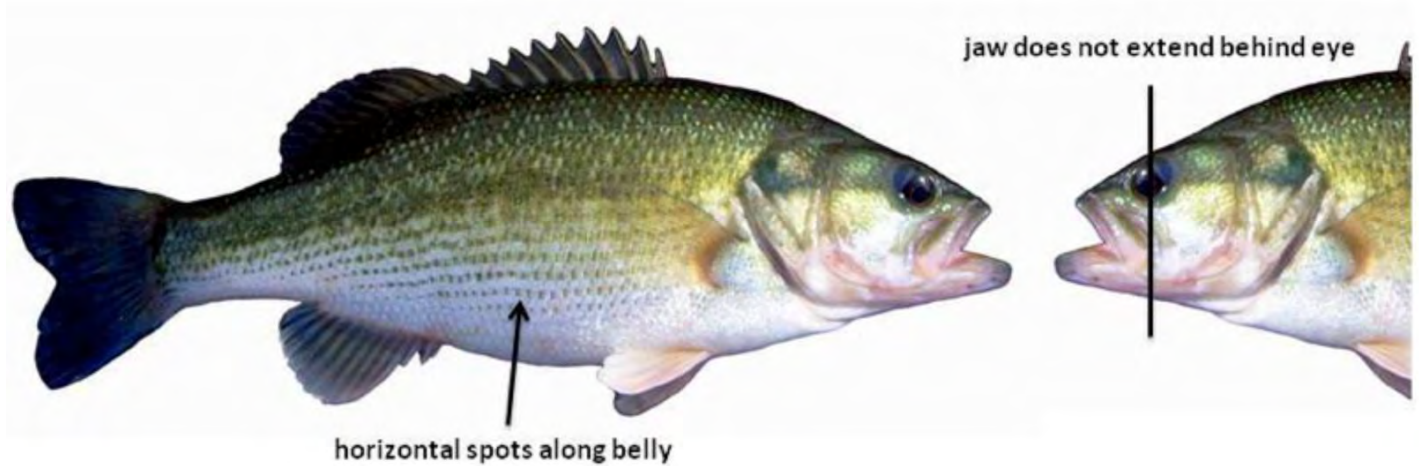
Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 18.15 pounds, caught in 1992 in Natchez State Park Lake by Anthony Denny.

Fishing Fact

Spring through fall is a great time to fish for largemouth bass with best success usually occurring during the evenings or mornings using minnows, artificial baits, and even frogs. The largemouth bass is also Mississippi's state fish.



Spotted Bass (*Micropterus punctulatus*)



Other Names

Kentucky bass, Diamond bass, Creek bass, Red-eye bass, and Spot

Description

Spotted bass are slender with rows of dark spots on the lower sides. These spots form horizontal streaks. Spotted bass also have a stripe along the middle of each side that form diamond-shaped blotches. The back of these fish is a dark mottling against an olive green color. The top and sides of these fish are dark, but the underside of the body is white. Spotted bass can reach lengths of 24 inches but are usually smaller with maximum size less than either largemouth or smallmouth bass. These fish usually live no more than six years. Females tend to live longer and grow faster than males.

Habits and Habitat

The diet of spotted bass changes as the fish grow, changing from plankton, small aquatic insects, and small

crustaceans to larger aquatic and terrestrial insects, crayfish, and small fish. Spotted bass live in streams and rivers, preferring faster waters than largemouth bass. They have adapted very well to reservoirs, and are often found around rocks or rip-rap. These fish spawn in mid-April through June. Spawning occurs in water temperatures of about 63°F to 78°F. Female and male spotted bass are mature at the age of two years. Spotted bass like other bass are nest spawners. The males build nests and guard the nests until the eggs hatch.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 8 pounds 2 ounces, caught in a farm pond in 1975 by S. R. Grantham.

Fishing Fact

Spinner baits, jigs, crank baits, plastic worms, and live worms are popular for landing a spotted bass.



Smallmouth Bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*)



Other Names

Brown bass, Brownie, Bronze back, and Smallie.

Description

These bass are slender with a projecting lower jaw and an upper jaw that never extends further back of the eyes. Cheeks display at least three dark lines, but no dark lateral line appears on the side. Smallmouth bass are an olive green or a brown color on the head as well as the back area with the belly area a cream or white color. The sides are yellowish green with bronze vertical markings, and dark brown markings are seen down both sides of the head. Smallmouth can reach lengths of over 24 inches and weights of almost 8 pounds.

Habits and Habitat

Smallmouth bass prefer cool streams as well as clear, cool reservoirs and lakes with rock or gravel bottoms. In Mississippi, smallmouth bass are only found in the Tennessee River and Bear Creek systems, especially

Pickwick Lake. The diet of smallmouth bass changes as they grow, changing from plankton, small aquatic insects, and small crustaceans to larger aquatic and terrestrial insects, crayfish, and small fish. Spawning occurs during the spring (April – May) with water temperatures around 60°F to 78°F. Smallmouth bass construct nests in gravel and also under tree roots and stumps. Males can spawn with different females, and males guard the nests after spawning and immediately after hatching occurs.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 7 pounds 15 ounces, caught by Thomas Wilbanks in Yellow Creek (Pickwick Lake) in 1987.

Fishing Fact

Crank baits, jigs, minnows, or crayfish (artificial or natural) are excellent baits to use when trying to catch smallmouth bass.



Redear Sunfish (*Lepomis macrolophus*)



Other Names

Chinquapin, Shellcracker, Stump knocker, Government bream, Cherry gill.

Description

Redear have an elongated body, small mouth, and pointed snout. Redear are dark olive with yellow on their sides and belly. These fish are identified by a distinctive red edge (in males) or orange edge (in females) on the gill cover (ear flap). The red margin on the “ear flap” is where they get their name. Redear usually weigh less than 1 pound but can weigh over 4 pounds and reach lengths of 14 inches. These fish usually live between five and six years but can live as long as nine years.

Habits and Habitat

Redear feed on the bottom for snails and clams as well as insects, insect larvae and crustaceans. Reach down their mouth into their throat with your pinky and you’ll

discover the crushers they use to crunch up snail and clam shells. Because of their feeding habits, they are usually larger than bluegill in the same waters. They prefer clear quiet waters with abundant vegetation. Spawning occurs in spring and early summer in water temperatures near 70°F. Redear normally only spawn once each year, whereas bluegill may spawn multiple times a year. Redear construct nests close together when spawning.

State Record

Mississippi’s Rod and Reel record 3.33 pounds, caught by James K. Martin at Tippah County Lake in 1991.

Fishing Fact

Fishing on the bottom using natural baits such as earthworms and grubs is an effective way to fish for redear. They are less likely to take artificial baits than other sunfish.



Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*)



Other Names

Bream (Brim), Coppernose, Copperhead, Bull bream, Blue sunfish, and Blue joe.

Description

Bluegill are deep bodied. They are dark olive green with a distinctive black spot on the dorsal fin and intense colors on breeding males. The sides are a blue or silver color with vertical bars and the belly is yellow, silver, or white. The coppernose bluegill is a Florida subspecies whose fins have whitish margins and whose head displays a copper patch. These bluegill are stocked in smaller impoundments in the southern and central portions of the state. Bluegill usually weigh between 1/2 to 1 pound but some catches have been over 3 pounds. Bluegill can live up to seven years.

Habits and Habitat

These fish prefer vegetated waters of shallow lakes and ponds, feeding on insect larvae. Spawning begins when water temperatures reach around 65°F and these fish often spawn multiple times during the summer. Bluegill are community spawners with nests located close together. Nests are not located in heavily vegetated areas. Males will compete for a site, sweeping away sand and exposing coarse gravel.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 3.45 pounds, caught by Gerald E. Thurmond in a farm pond in 1995.

Fishing Fact

Even small bluegill can put up a scrappy fight. Crickets, earthworms, and small artificials (spinners and flies) are excellent baits for bluegill.



Warmouth (*Lepomis gulosus*)



Other Names

Bigmouth, Goggle eye, Indian fish, Warmouth bass, Wide mouth, and Stump knocker.

Description

Warmouth are robust, blotchy sunfish with the upper jaw extending back behind the pupil. The back of the warmouth is a dark brown color that will sometimes have a hint of olive. The sides have vertically striped bars displaying specks of gold or green; colors are more intense during the breeding season. The belly is a combination of white, yellow, and orange. Warmouth can grow up to 11 inches in length. They usually weigh less than a pound, but can grow larger.

Habits and Habitat

Warmouth feed on crawfish, crabs, small fish, insects, and insect larvae. Most feeding takes place at dusk, at dawn, or at night, with very little activity in the middle of the day. These fish are usually found in ponds, reservoirs,

and slow moving vegetated streams. They are found near stumps and heavily vegetated areas. They are more common in dark, acidic, “swampy” waters. Like other sunfish, warmouth are nest spawners. Males build nests in areas with heavy cover. Spawning takes place between May and August when water temperatures reach about 70°F. Many anglers consider the warmouth a popular sport fish. These fish do not appear to overpopulate small waters and do not show signs of stunted growth as other sunfish do.

State Record

Mississippi’s Rod and Reel record is 1 pound 8 ounces caught by Lillian Morris in Black Creek in 1979.

Fishing Fact

Warmouth are often caught by anglers fishing for bluegill or crappie in shallow water with crickets, worms, or minnows. With their large mouths, they often hit bass lures.



Green Sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*)



Other Names

Goggle eye, Pool perch, Green perch, and Pond perch.

Description

Green sunfish are shallow-bodied sunfish with a fairly large mouth. Their back is brownish gray to olive, the sides are a lighter green or slate with light blue or emerald flecks, and the undersides of the head and body are bright yellow or yellow-orange. Their cheek is marbled with iridescent blue-green markings. Their average length is 4 inches and they range between 2 to 8 inches in length.

Habits and Habitat

Green sunfish are able to tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions and are found in streams, oxbow lakes, reservoirs, and ponds. Green sunfish nest in shallow water colonies where nests are often closely packed. Spawning occurs in late spring, when water temperatures rise above 70°F, and may continue throughout the summer. Adults feed on insects and small fish. Because of their enormous spawning potential, green sunfish often overpopulate small lakes

and ponds. Small green sunfish often swim from lakes and streams up very shallow, running water after heavy spring rains to colonize new waters, often showing up in new ponds, giving the impression they were “rained in” or “came in on bird feet”. They may establish a population early in new ponds and may eat stocked bass and bluegill fingerlings. Green sunfish are often caught fishing for other sunfish, but are usually too small to be of much interest.

State Record

The state record is 1.26 pounds, caught by Craig Jones in 1986.

Fishing Fact

Green sunfish are commonly used as live bait on trotlines, set hooks, and jugs for catfish. Hybrids between a female green sunfish and a male bluegill (“hybrid bream”) often are stocked in small ponds as a put-and-take fishery. These hybrids may be fertile, despite claims to the contrary, and will back-cross to less desirable hybrids in a few years.



Longear Sunfish (*Lepomis megalotis*)



Other Names

Creek perch, Red belly, Big-eared sunfish, Tobacco box, and Pumpkinseed.

Description

The top portion of the longear's body ranges from brown to olive green. Fins are also an olive green color with traces of orange and red. Longear sunfish have a red belly and breast area and blue stripes. Additional colored markings are seen on the body. Longear sunfish have a long gill flap, which is black and edged in white. The colors in males will be more brilliant during breeding and are one of our most beautiful fish. Longear sunfish are normally small but can reach lengths of 7 inches. These fish can live up to 6 years.

Habits and Habitat

These fish normally inhabit small streams and creeks but are also found in reservoirs and oxbow lakes. Their

main food source are insects and small fish. Spawning takes place in shallow waters in a period ranging from the later portion of spring into the early portion of summer. Longear are nest spawners with nests located close together.

State Record

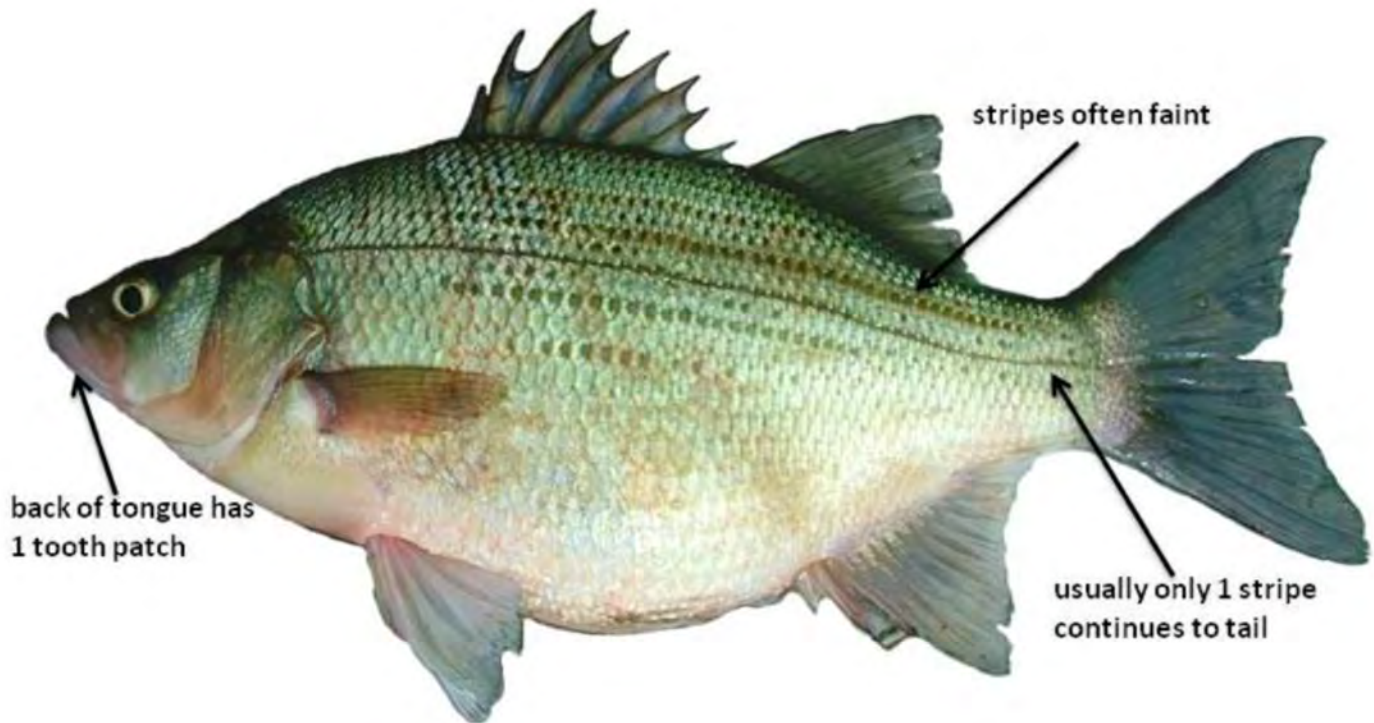
Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 0.21 pounds, caught by Patton Guest in Fresh Water Lake in 2009.

Fishing Fact

Longears are usually caught fishing for other sunfish, but most are too small to be of much interest. The largest longears are found in fertile Delta oxbows. Small poppers and many different types of bait like crickets can be used to catch longear.



White Bass (*Morone chrysops*)



Other Names

Sand bass, Barfish, Stripe, Silver bass, and Striped bass.

Description

White bass are deep bodied with an arched back and a lower jaw that projects further than the top jaw. White bass are often confused with small striped bass. The white bass is a bluish gray on the back with white in the belly area, and both of the silvery sides have between four and seven dark lateral stripes. These fish usually weigh between 1 and 3 pounds but can reach weights of 7 pounds. White bass typically do not live more than 5 years.

Habits and Habitat

Although they will eat insects, white bass feed mostly on gizzard and threadfin shad. These bass, which are a

popular sport fish, can be found in the Mississippi River and oxbow lakes along the river. White bass are native to large rivers but are also found in reservoirs. They typically move upstream into rivers and streams when spawning. Water temperature for spawning is between 62°F and 68°F (usually between March and May). Prior to spawning, white bass form large schools and migrate upstream.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record for the white bass is 5 pounds 6 ounces, caught by William Mulvhill in the Grenada Reservoir Spillway in 1979.

Fishing Fact

Jigs, spinners, crank baits (small and medium) and minnows are popular lures used for white bass fishing.



Striped Bass (*Morone saxatilis*)



Other Names

Rock fish, Stripe, Greenhead, Striper, and Sea-run.

Description

Striped bass are laterally compressed, elongated fish with large mouths. The back is olive green or blue-green with a white belly. The sides have up to nine dark lateral stripes against a silver or silvery-blue background. They can be distinguished from white bass by having several stripes extending to the tail, two tooth patches on the back of the tongue, a torpedo shaped body, and normally a larger size. These fish usually weigh between 5 and 15 pounds but can weigh up to 60 pounds or more with fish living in reservoirs growing faster than those in rivers. Striped bass can live up to 12 years.

Habits and Habitat

Striped bass feed on insect larvae, shrimp, small crustaceans, and fish, particularly shad. These bass live

in freshwater streams, reservoirs, and coastal drainages. Striped bass prefer cooler water, especially larger striped bass. Because of this, stripers typically don't do well in Mississippi reservoirs. These fish will spawn as early as February or as late as April when water temperatures reach about 57°F to 70°F.

State Record

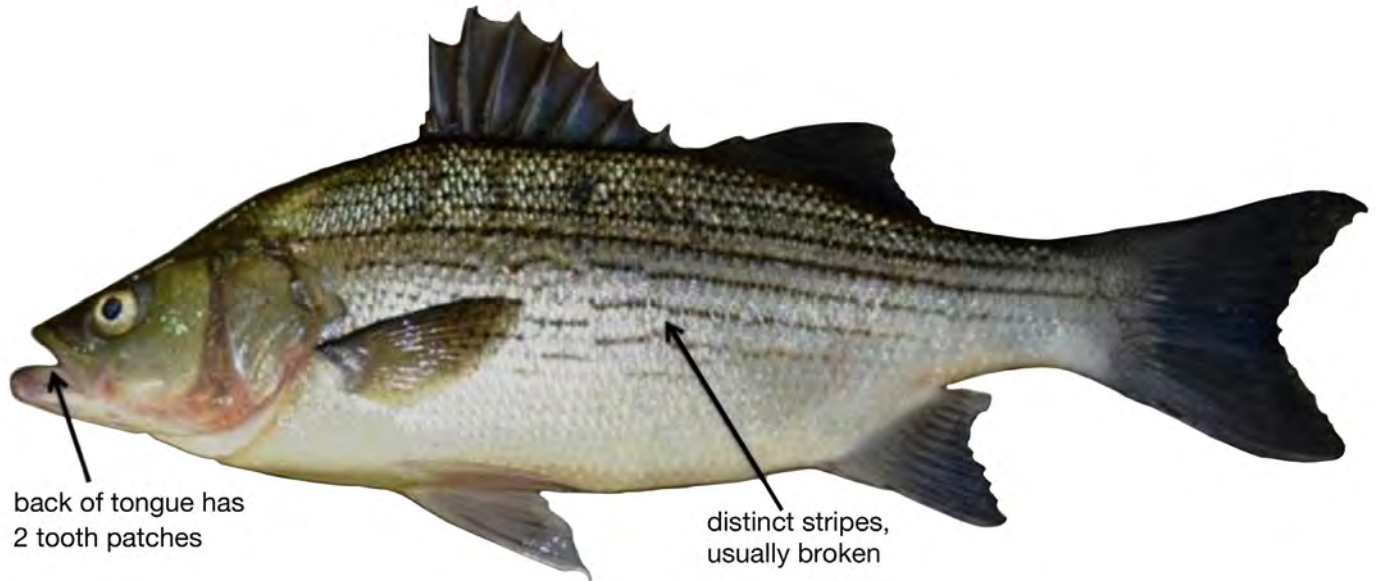
The Mississippi Rod and Reel record weighing 37.8 pounds was caught in 1993 by T. Graves in the Bouie River.

Fishing Fact

Slab spoons, deep running artificial lures, and jigs (particularly chartreuse and white colors) are effective when trying to land a striped bass.



Hybrid Striped Bass (*Morone saxatilis* X *Morone chrysops*)



Other Names

Sunshine bass, Cherokee bass, Wipers, and Hybrids.

Description

A cross between the female white bass and the male striped bass, hybrid striped bass rarely occur naturally in the wild but have been stocked throughout the State. Hybrid striped bass have broken horizontal lines that distinguish them from striped bass. Hybrids have a blue to dark bluish or blackish colored back, light colored sides, and white belly. These bass usually weigh between 5 to 10 pounds but can reach weights of 20 pounds. Hybrid striped bass can reach lengths of 17 inches or more. Hybrid striped bass usually live 5 to 6 years.

Habits and Habitat

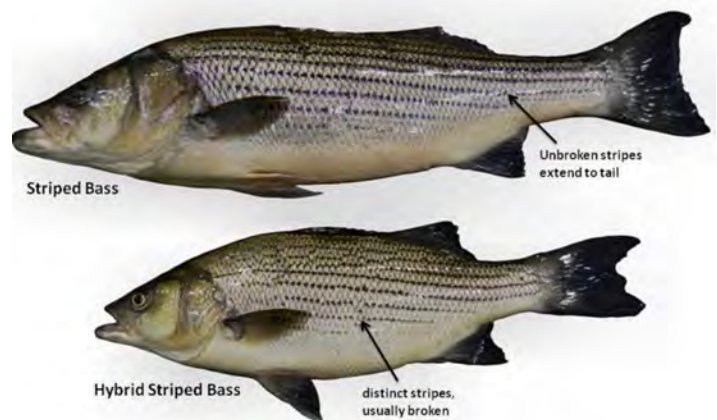
Adults primarily feed on gizzard and threadfin shad. Hybrid striped bass are found in a variety of habitats from sandy, shallow areas to rocky areas near dams. Hybrids are more tolerant of warm water than striped bass and survive better in Mississippi lakes.

State Record

The Mississippi State Rod and Reel record is 17.8 pounds, caught in Lower Sardis Lake by Robert Fulce in 1991.

Fishing Fact

Anglers catch schooling hybrid bass on a variety of lures. Deeper holding fish can be caught by trolling crankbaits. These fish are often stocked to control shad populations in lakes and reservoirs and to provide an additional sport fish for anglers.





Yellow Bass (*Morone mississippiensis*)



Other Names

Rockfish, Streaker, and Yellow belly.

Description

Yellow bass are laterally compressed, deep bodied fish displaying dark stripes on the sides. These lateral stripes are similar to the white bass, but the stripes on the yellow bass are darker and broken above the anal fin. Yellow bass can also be distinguished from white bass by the absence of a tooth patch on the tongue. Its yellowish sides are the main reason for its name, even though the sides display dark brown or black lines. These fish can grow over 2 pounds, but yellow bass are usually small, which reduces its popularity as a game fish.

Habits and Habitat

The diet of Yellow Bass consists of other fish and insects and may include shrimp and crabs in coastal areas.

These fish mostly live in oxbow lakes and rivers, and are also found in areas with abundant aquatic vegetation. Spawning takes place in April and May in shallow water when water temperatures are between 60°F and 70°F. They tend to overpopulate and stunt in smaller lakes and ponds.

State Record

The Mississippi Rod and Reel record for the yellow bass is 1.76 pounds and was caught by J. Hopper in 2010 in Pickwick Lake.

Fishing Fact

Use lures and baits that resemble small insects, minnows, small shad, small Sunfish, insects and insect larvae. However, minnows are the best bait to use on yellow bass, though they are very effective at catching other fish as well.



Walleye (*Sander vitreus*)



Other Names

Yellow pickerel, Marble eye, Glass eye, and Jack fish.

Description

The name reflects its large, glossy eyes. Walleye have a slender body and a mouth full of sharp teeth. These fish are golden yellow or greenish brown with dark blotches and a white belly. A white area on the lower lobe of the tail distinguishes it from its smaller cousin, the sauger. Walleye are usually between 14 and 28 inches long but can reach lengths of over 30 inches. Females grow larger than males. Walleye can reach weights of up to 10 pounds but can grow to 25 pounds. Walleye usually live 5 to 8 years but can live up to 10 or even 20 years.

Habits and Habitat

Walleye typically feed and spawn at night. These fish feed on insects and crayfish in rocky areas. However, the walleye's most common source of food is fish, primarily gizzard and threadfin shad. In Mississippi, these fish are found mainly in the Tennessee Tombigbee

Waterway and its tributaries. Walleye spawn in shallow water with rocky substrate when water temperatures are between 48°F and 56°F. This occurs in March. The Southern Walleye (Gulf Coast Walleye) is unique to the Mobile River Basin. It is genetically different from the northern strain of walleye. Southern Walleye are a "Species of Concern" because of habitat alterations.

State Record

The Mississippi Rod and Reel record for walleye is 9.66 pounds, caught by Clayton E. Hobbs in the Tennessee River (Iuka) in 1985.

Fishing Fact

Walleye are excellent sport fish and are sought after for their white, flaky meat. Walleye are best caught at night during the winter and in early spring. Many are caught on trot lines. Effective baits to use when fishing for walleye are nightcrawlers, minnows, plugs, spinner combos, and jigs.



Chain/Redfin Pickerel (*Esox spp*)



Other Names

Green pike, Duckbilled pike, Black pike, and Jack fish.

Description

These fish are long and slender with a long mouth and well-developed teeth. Pickerel have dark brown or green chainlike marks on the sides with a dark back. The snout is dark, and fins have a dusky coloring to them. Pickerel can weigh 2 to 10 pounds and can reach lengths of up to 31 inches. They can live up to 9 years in the wild with females growing faster and living longer than males.

Habits and Habitat

Adults feed mostly on crayfish and small fish like shad, sunfishes, and shiners. They feed mostly in the early morning and late evening. They live in clear lakes

and streams but prefer lakes with abundant aquatic vegetation. Pickerel spawn in vegetation as the sticky eggs attach themselves to the plants. Spawning takes place in late winter or early spring when water temperatures are between about 39°F and 59°F. Unlike some species pickerel do not guard the eggs after spawning.

State Record

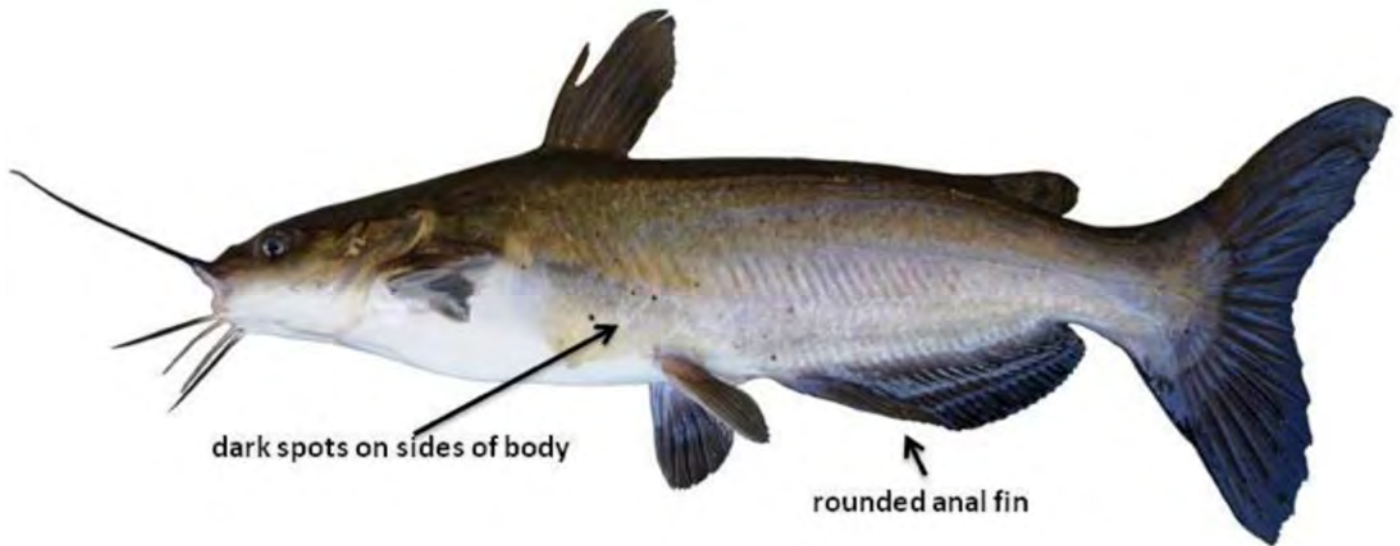
The Mississippi Rod and Reel record weighing 6.25 pounds was caught in Bay Springs Lake by R. Boren in 1986.

Fishing Fact

Pickerel are often caught by anglers using the same artificial lures offered to largemouth bass.



Channel Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*)



Other Names

Fiddler, Willow cat, Speckled cat, Spotted cat, Government cat, and River cat.

Description

Channel catfish have elongated bodies with a whitish belly and olive or brown body. They have a deeply forked tail, barbels, and black spots on the sides and tail. Channel catfish can be distinguished from blue catfish by their rounded anal fin (versus straight in blue catfish) and the presences of dark spots on the body. These spots are often not present in large fish. Channel catfish typically weigh between 5 and 10 pounds but can reach weights of over 50 pounds. These fish can reach lengths of up to 50 inches. Channel catfish normally live at least 6 to 10 years but can live longer.

Habits and Habitat

Channel catfish feed on insect larvae, crustaceans, crayfish, and small fish such as gizzard shad and

minnows. These fish are active at night in streams, rivers, oxbow lakes, and ponds. Channel catfish spawn in late spring to early summer when water temperatures are between 60°F and 75°F. Channel catfish are raised commercially in the Delta and other areas in the state. Channel catfish are often stocked in small lakes and ponds. If too many are stocked in bass-bream ponds, the result is poor growth of all fish and muddy water from the feeding action of overabundant catfish.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 51 pounds 12 ounces, caught by Tom Edwards at Lake Tom Bailey in 1997.

Fishing Fact

These fish can be caught in a variety of ways including hand grabbing, jugs, limblines, rod and reels, and trotlines. Best baits to use are liver, stink baits, cut fishes, and worms; they are rarely caught on artificials.



Blue Catfish (*Ictalurus furcatus*)



Other Names

Great forktail cat, Blue channel, Humpback, White river cat, White sailor, Blue sailor, and Mississippi cat.

Description

Blue catfish are a somewhat robust catfish with a humped back. These fish have a deeply forked caudal fin. Larger mature fish are a dark blue color that fades into a white belly. Blue catfish can be distinguished from channel catfish by their straight anal fin (versus rounded in channel catfish) and the absence of dark spots on the body. These fish can commonly attain weights of 5 to 20 pounds but can reach lengths of over 5 feet and weigh up to 130 pounds. These fish can live over 20 years.

Habits and Habitat

Adults feed on smaller fish, various mollusks (mussels and clams), shrimp, crabs, crayfish, and aquatic insects. These fish are found in larger rivers, oxbow lakes, reservoirs, and brackish water near the coast.

State Record

The Mississippi Rod and Reel record is 95 pounds, caught by Dakota Hinson on the Mississippi River at Natchez in 2009.

Fishing Fact

Methods that anglers use to target blue catfish include hand grabbing, tight lining, trot lining, and jug fishing. Stink baits and worms used for channel cats are less likely to take blues than minnows or cut shad.



Flathead Catfish (*Pylodictis olivaris*)



Other Names

Appaloosa cat, Shovelhead cat, Tabby cat, Willow cat, Spotted cat, and Yellow cat.

Description

Flathead catfish adults are full bodied fish with small eyes, a flat head, and a round caudal fin (tail). The lower jaw protrudes past the upper jaw. Flathead catfish are a mottled grey to an olive/tan color on the back. The belly is yellow or white in color. These fish can reach lengths of over 4 feet and weights of more than 90 pounds.

Habits and Habitat

Adult flatheads feed mostly on the bottom on crayfish and smaller fish such as darters, sunfishes, minnows, shad, and smaller catfish. Feeding and movement increase at night. Flathead catfish are normally found in deep pools of streams or rivers and are normally associated with underwater structure. They are often commonly found in oxbow lakes and reservoirs in Mississippi. Spawning begins in May and continues through July in

logs, holes, or depressions on the bottom when water temperatures reach about 72°F to 75°F. Males guard the nests even after eggs hatch. Tagging studies have shown flatheads are territorial and tend to stay in the same area. Flatheads should never be stocked in bass-bream ponds due to their voracious fish-eating habits. They will eliminate almost all but the very smallest bream from a pond..

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 77.7 pounds, caught by Matt Bingham in the Mississippi River in April 2012.

Fishing Fact

The use of trotlines, limb lines, rod-and-reel, and jugs with live bait, along with hand-grabbing, are all common methods of catching flathead catfish. Because of their size and good eating qualities, they are usually considered the trophy of the catfish clan.



Black Bullhead (*Ameiurus melas*)



Other Names

Small bullhead, Mudcat, Smoothie and Polliwog.

Description

Black bullheads are full-bodied fish having small eyes and dark chin barbels. The upper jaw protrudes past the lower jaw. A mixture of black, yellow, and brown color the upper sides and back of these fish while the belly is a white color. These fish can reach lengths of over 20 inches and reach weights of 7 pounds or more, though most fish average less than a pound in weight.

Habits and Habitat

Adult black bullheads are bottom feeders, preying mostly on crayfish, aquatic insects, and fish. Black bullheads are found in streams, deep pools, and oxbow lakes. They are also found in reservoirs but do better in smaller water areas. Spawning for the black bullhead

varies starting from early spring lasting through the summer when water temperatures are 68°F to about 72°F. Unlike other fish, the female usually constructs the nests and will guard it first before the male, and continues to guard it after spawning takes place. Like green sunfish, bullheads often colonize new ponds from existing water bodies and overpopulate and compete with bass and bream.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 5.56 pounds, caught by Harold Alexander in Sunrise Lake in 1988.

Fishing Fact

Black bullheads are generally not sought after by Mississippi anglers due to their small size, but these fish can be caught with worms or other natural bait in streams or small ponds.



Yellow Bullhead (*Ameiurus natalis*)



Other Names

Mudcat, Butter ball, Butter cat, Smoothie, Polliwog, Paper skin, and White whisker bullhead.

Description

Yellow bullheads are moderately robust fish having a rounded or square caudal fin. The chin area is white, including the barbels on the chin. The back and sides of yellow bullheads are usually yellow to yellow-brown in color as their name implies. Compared to the brown bullhead and the black bullhead, the yellow bullhead is usually smaller. These fish can reach weights up to 6 pounds, but most fish are less than a pound. Yellow bullheads live up to 6 years.

Habits and Habitat

Yellow bullheads feed on crayfish, grass shrimp, worms, aquatic insects, beetles, and fish. Yellow bullheads can be found in streams, rivers, and ponds and are

commonly seen in oxbow lakes. These fish prefer clear, heavily vegetated water. Spawning begins in spring and continues through early summer. Both the male and female will construct the nest with their fins and shovel material out of the nest with their snout. Rocks are also removed with the mouth, and both fish will sit on the nest facing opposite directions.

State Record

The Mississippi State Rod and Reel record is 2 pounds 13 ounces, caught by Robert Cason in Mossy Lake in 1974.

Fishing Fact

Yellow bullheads are usually caught on baits intended for bream or catfish. They are generally considered undesirable to anglers due to their small size, which results from their tendency to overpopulate.



Shortnose Gar (*Lepisosteus platostomus*)



Other Names

Billy gar, Short-billed gar, Stub-nose gar, Duckbilled gar, or Broadnose gar.

Description

Shortnose gar have elongated bodies with a short, broad snout and spots on the tail. The underside is lightly colored with the sides and back of the fish having an olive green color. Shortnose gar may be distinguished from other gar species in that they lack the double row of teeth in the upper jaw of the alligator gar, the long snout of the longnose gar, and the spots of the spotted gar. Shortnose gar are smaller than other gar species in Mississippi, and rarely exceed a length of 3 feet or 5 pounds in weight. These are the smallest of the four different gar species, reaching lengths of 2 to 4 feet.

Habits and Habitat

Adults feed primarily on other fish, but also eat insect larvae and small crawfish, shrimp, and crabs. The

shortnose gar prefers quiet back waters of large rivers and oxbow lakes. Shortnose gar spawn in the spring and early summer (April through June) or when temperatures are between 66°F and 74°F in vegetated shallow water. Shortnose gar eggs, like other gar eggs, are poisonous.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record for the shortnose is 5.83 pounds, caught by Robert Mills in Enid spillway in 1999.

Fishing Fact

Shortnose gar may be captured by entangling the teeth in nylon threads or by bowfishing. They are rarely fished for intentionally, but are caught accidentally on baits and lures intended for other fish.



Spotted Gar (*Lepisosteus oculatus*)

Long, broad snout with spots



Other Names

Bill fish, Garfish, and Shortnose gar.

Description

Spotted gar have elongated bodies with a long, broad snout and spots on the head, fins, and body. This gar is a whitish color underneath and olive green on the sides and the back. Spotted gar normally weigh between 1 and 5 pounds, but can reach weights of 20 pounds. Spotted gar can reach lengths of over 3 feet. The spotted gar can live up to 18 years.

Habits and Habitat

Adults feed on insect larvae and small crustaceans, but mostly fish. Spotted gar feed in shallow water at night

while staying in deeper water during the day. Spotted gar prefer slow, clear waters of rivers and lakes and will spawn in shallow water with heavy vegetation and little water flow. Spawning season lasts from April to May.

State Record

The Mississippi Rod and Reel record for the spotted gar is 8.1 pounds, caught by Chuck Herring at the Enid Lake spillway in 2012.

Fishing Fact

Spotted gar may be captured by entangling the teeth in nylon threads or by bowfishing. They are rarely fished for intentionally, but are caught accidentally on baits and lures intended for other fish.



Longnose Gar (*Lepisosteus osseus*)



Other Names

Needlenose gar, Billyfish, Pin-nose gar, and Scissorlips.

Description

Longnose gar have an elongated body with a long, narrow snout and black spots on the fins and sides. The sides and back are dark brown or olive green with the belly a white color. Longnose gar normally grow longer than 3 feet, and often reach lengths of over 5 feet. Their weight is usually around 20 pounds, but they can reach weights of up to 40 pounds. Females grow faster and live longer than males. Males usually live 11 years but can live up to 17 years. Females, on the other hand, can live up to 22 years with most living longer than 17 years. In fact, longnose gar can live up to 30 years in captivity.

Habits and Habitat

A longnose gar's diet consists of fish, particularly shad and sunfishes. Longnose gar are normally found in medium to large rivers but also inhabit oxbow lakes, reservoirs, and estuaries. These fish spawn in the spring in shallow water ranging from 62°F to 70°F.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 40 pounds, caught by J.E. Bennett in Grenada Lake Spillway in 2004.

Fishing Fact

Longnose gar often tangle themselves in nets, and are caught by using nylon threads to snare the teeth. Longnose gar often jump repeatedly when hooked. They are also targeted by bowfishers. Some people prefer gar meat fried or smoked.



Alligator Gar (*Atractosteus spatula*)



Other Names

Mississippi alligator gar, Great gar, Gator, and Gator gar.

Description

The name reflects the shape of the alligator gar's head which resembles an alligator. Alligator gar have a short, broad snout, and the upper jaw has two rows of large teeth. These fish have a cylindrical body that is olive-brown on the back and on the sides. The belly is lighter in color, and dark spots are seen on the fins. The alligator gar is the largest of the gar species. Alligator gar can reach over 9 feet in length and weigh over 300 pounds.

Habits and Habitat

Fish are the main component of the alligator gar's diet. Alligator gar may also eat ducks and cormorants. Gar in brackish water near the coast prey on blue crabs, mullet, and other fish. Spawning occurs in late spring, in and around dense areas of aquatic vegetation. Alligator gar

typically inhabit large river systems, but can also be found in oxbow lakes, bayous, and estuaries. Alligator gar have declined precipitously throughout much of their former range and are most common in south Mississippi.

State Record

In 2011, the new trophy record alligator gar was caught with bow and arrow; this gar weighed 234 pounds. In the same year, a commercial fisherman in Lake Chotard caught a 327 pound alligator gar in his gill net. It measured 8 feet 5 ½ inches long. Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 215 pounds, caught by Earl Stafford in the Mississippi River near Natchez in 2003.

Fishing Fact

Alligator gar are sometimes targeted on rod-and-reel by folks after a true trophy. These fish pull hard, jump often, and fight all the way to the boat and in it!



Paddlefish (*Ploydon spathula*)



Other Names

Spoonbill, Spoonbill catfish, Shovel bill cat, Shovelfish, and Shovelnose.

Description

Paddlefish are usually a dark purplish-gray color on the back with white sides and belly. Paddlefish can reach lengths of 6 feet and weigh as much as 100 pounds.

Habits and Habitat

Researchers once believed that the paddle was used as a shovel to find food; later, it was discovered that sensory organs cover the paddle, which is used to find food. The primary food sources for adult paddlefish are very small animals and insect larvae called zooplankton. Adults filter plankton using their gill rakers. Young paddlefish eat insects and large zooplankton. They are well-adapted to river systems, preferring large reservoirs and

free-flowing rivers. Paddlefish spawn in late March or early April when water temperatures are between 58°F and 62°F. These fish spawn in swift moving river waters with gravel bottoms. Paddlefish are most abundant in Mississippi in the Mississippi River and Delta rivers and oxbows.

State Record

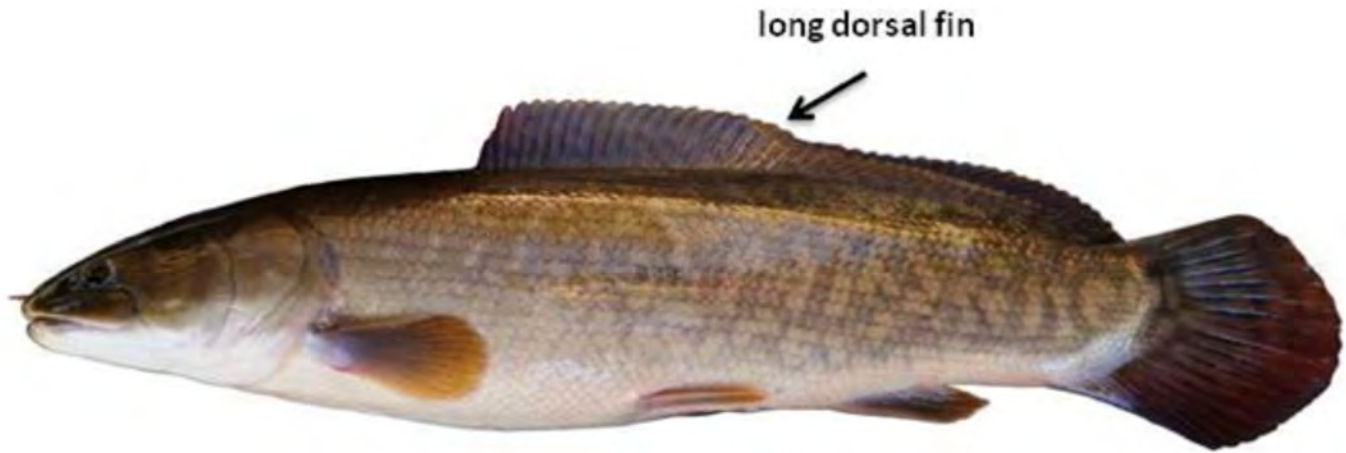
The Mississippi State Rod and Reel record is 65 pounds, caught by Randy Pues in Ross Barnett Reservoir Spillway in 1974.

Fishing Fact

Paddlefish are harvested for their meat and their eggs (roe), which are desirable for caviar. The demand for paddlefish roe increased as European and Russian sturgeon roe availability decreased. These fish are harvested by snagging and by commercial netting.



Bowfin (*Amia calva*)



Other Names

Grinnel, Dog fish, Choupique, Cypress trout, Cypress bass, and Mud fish.

Description

Bowfin have a flattened head with sharp teeth and a long, stout body with a long, distinctive dorsal fin. Their swim bladder, which extends the entire length of the body, is used as a lung. These fish surface to exhale and inhale air, replenishing the air in their swim bladder. A distinctive black spot bordered by orange or yellow is located just in front of the caudal fin on young bowfin and on most adult males. The back and sides are mottled olive green turning to a lighter green or a whitish color on the belly. All the fins are light green except for the dorsal and caudal fins, which are dark green. The green color of males is heightened during the spawning season. Bowfin usually reach weights of 1 to 3 pounds but can weigh over 20 pounds. Bowfin can grow to 25 inches in length and live up to 10 years.

Habits and Habitat

Bowfin prefer shallow oxbow lakes, sluggish rivers, and swamps and feed primarily on fish. They also eat crayfish, grass shrimp, frogs, and insects. Bowfin

migrate into shallower areas and usually feed at night. They spawn in the spring when water temperatures are between 64°F and 78°F. Males build bowl shaped nests, which are constructed in shallow, weedy areas. Bowfin are extremely tolerant of poor water quality and can survive in very poor habitats due to their ability to breathe air with their swim bladder.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 18 pounds 14 ounces, caught by B. H. Toney at Ross Barnett Reservoir in 1978.

Fishing Fact

Bowfin flesh is of poor quality and is rarely eaten. Bowfin eggs, however, are edible and sold worldwide as a less expensive substitute for sturgeon caviar. Bowfin are considered by many anglers to be one of the most aggressive fish to hook while fishing. Baits used for catching bowfin include nightcrawlers, minnows, frogs, crayfish, and artificial baits. Bowfin are often confused with the exotic snakehead fish. Bowfin have a small anal fin located on the belly, but snakeheads have a distinctive anal fin that is very long and similar to the dorsal fin.



Freshwater Drum (*Aplodinotus grunniens*)



Other Names

Drum fish, Gaspergou, Goo, Sheepshead, Grunt, or Croaker.

Description

The common name comes from the drumming sound it makes with its air bladder. Drum are silvery all over, sometimes having a purple or reddish tinge. They have a down-turned mouth and a humped back. Their most distinctive feature is a tail that comes to a single point. Drum have large ear stones (otoliths) in the inner ear used or associated with motion detection and hearing. These ear stones are called “lucky bones.” They were used by Native Americans to ward off sicknesses or to use in ceremonies; they were also used as wampum by certain tribes. These fish have a blunt rounded snout; they are deep bodied and silvery. Drum can reach weights of 50 pounds, but their weight is usually less than 10 pounds. Drum can live up to 13 years.

Habits and Habitat

Adults feed on fish, mussels, clams, and snails. Freshwater drum prefer to inhabit silty bottoms in rivers, reservoirs and oxbow lakes. Water temperature during spawning is between 64°F and 78°F; this occurs in May and June.

State Record

Mississippi’s Rod and Reel record is 29.85 pounds, caught by Bryan Alan Christian in Sardis Lake Spillway in 2011.

Fishing Fact

Drum are normally not targeted by anglers in Mississippi, but are sometimes caught while fishing for other species with minnows or artificial lures. They hit and fight hard!



Common Carp (*Cyprinus carpio*)



Other Names

German carp, European carp, Buglemouth bass, or Carp.

Description

Common carp are heavy-bodied minnows with barbels on either side of the upper jaw. Typically, they are orange, but their color varies from olive green, brassy green or yellow, golden brown, or even gray on top with yellowish-white on the belly. Carp measuring 12 to 25 inches in length and weighing 5 to 25 pounds are common. Common carp can weigh over 75 pounds and reach lengths of 48 inches. Carp may also live in excess of 47 years in ponds. In the wild, their lifespan usually does not exceed 20 years.

Habits and Habitat

Carp feed on the bottom for plant and animal material. Carp live in a variety of habitats from deep streams to marshes. Common carp are native to temperate

portions of Europe and Asia. They were first introduced into North America in the late 1880s. Spawning occurs in shallow, weedy areas in the spring with water temperatures between 62°F and 76°F. Though common carp have historically been considered a nuisance, a growing number of anglers in the United States have developed an interest in carp as a sportfish.

State Record

The Mississippi Rod and Reel record is 74 pounds, caught in 1963 at Pelahatchie Lake by Curtis Wade. This is also the largest carp caught on hook and line in the U.S.

Fishing Fact

Carp can be caught using a variety of baits from pet food to dough-balls and canned corn. Carp are very finicky, hard-to-fool fish that put up a strong fight. Carp are also targeted by bowfishers.



Bigmouth Buffalo (*Ictiobus cyprinellus*)



large, wide mouth with no barbels
that points straight ahead

Other Names

Buffalo, White buffalo, and Gourdhead.

Description

Bigmouth buffalo are deep-bodied fish having a large, wide mouth. They have a coppery olive-brown or gray back and sides with a white belly and white lips. Bigmouth buffalo can be distinguished from common carp by the lack of barbels on the mouth, and from smallmouth buffalo by the mouth pointing straight ahead. Bigmouth buffalo can reach lengths of 4 feet. They normally weigh between 3 and 12 pounds, but can reach weights of 80 pounds. Bigmouth buffalo can live up to 10 years in Mississippi, however, some have been reported to live as long as 20 years.

Habits and Habitat

These fish feed on the bottom seeking insects, mollusks, plants and algae. Bigmouth buffalo prefer large streams, rivers, oxbow lakes and reservoirs. Bigmouth buffalo spawn in the spring in shallow water when water temperatures are between 58°F and 78°F.

State Record

Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 46 pounds 3 ounces, caught by Willie Hearn at a private pond in 2007.

Fishing Fact

Bigmouth buffalo are rarely caught with a rod and reel, but are commonly sought after by commercial fishermen.



Smallmouth Buffalo (*Ictiobus bubalus*)



Other Names

Razor-back buffalo, Round buffalo, Buffalo drum, and Roachback.

Description

Smallmouth buffalo are deep-bodied. They are light to dark gray or black with a high arched back. This species of buffalo has a large head and large eyes with a small, downward turned mouth. Smallmouth buffalo can be distinguished from common carp by the lack of barbells, and from bigmouth buffalo by the mouth being downward pointing, and sucker-like. These buffalo can grow to lengths of around 36 inches. This fish usually weighs between 6 and 8 pounds, but can reach weights of up to 50 pounds. In the Yalobusha River, smallmouth buffalo can live at least nine years, but they have been reported living up to 18 years in different states.

Habits and Habitat

Smallmouth buffalo prefer deep, large streams, rivers, oxbow lakes, and reservoirs; this fish feeds on the bottom for insects, mollusks, plants, and algae. Between March and May, spawning occurs in shallow water with temperatures between 57°F and 70°F.

State Record

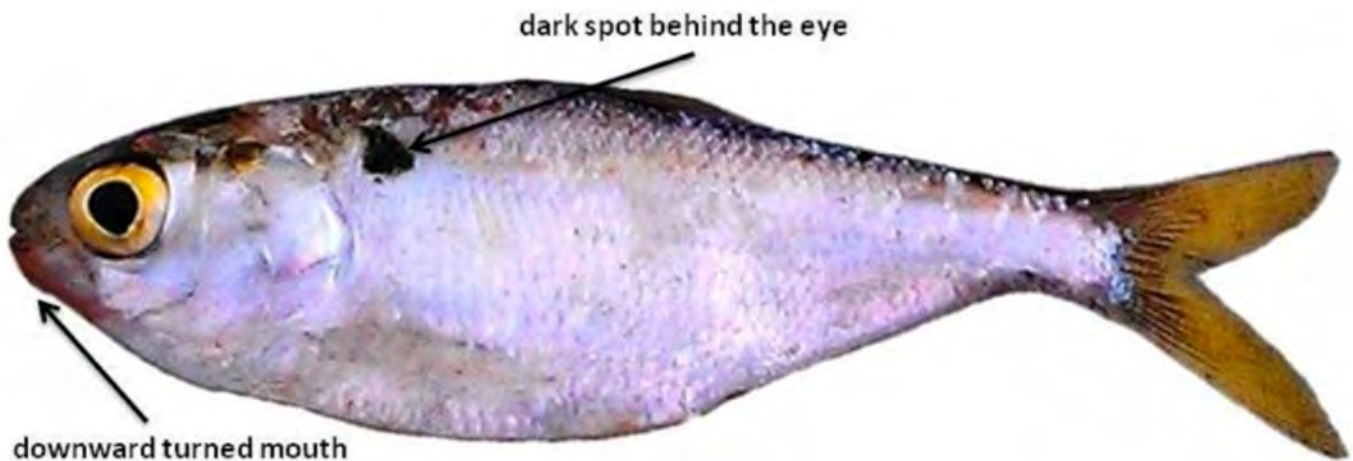
Mississippi's Rod and Reel record is 57 pounds 12 ounces, caught by Charles M. Cox at Ross Barnett Reservoir in 1983.

Fishing Fact

Smallmouth buffalo can be taken fishing worms on the bottom, but are rarely caught with a rod and reel. They are commonly sought after by commercial anglers with gill nets.



Gizzard Shad (*Dorosoma cepedianum*)



Other Names

Hickory shad, Skipjack, Shad, and Herring.

Description

Gizzard shad are abundant in most of Mississippi's rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs. Spawning takes place from mid-April to late June when water temperatures are 60°F to 70°F. They feed almost entirely on organic detritus but will also pick through mud and organic matter on the bottom for small food. Plant material is also consumed by gizzard shad and includes various kinds of algae that they filter from the water with long, closely spaced gill rakers. They grind up this material with a muscular gizzard.

Habits and Habitat

Gizzard shad are abundant in most of Mississippi's rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs. Spawning takes place

from mid-April to late June when water temperatures are 60°F to 70°F. They feed almost entirely on organic detritus but will also pick through mud and organic matter on the bottom for small food. Plant material is also consumed by gizzard shad and includes various kinds of algae that they filter from the water with long, closely spaced gill rakers. They grind up this material with a muscular gizzard.

State Record

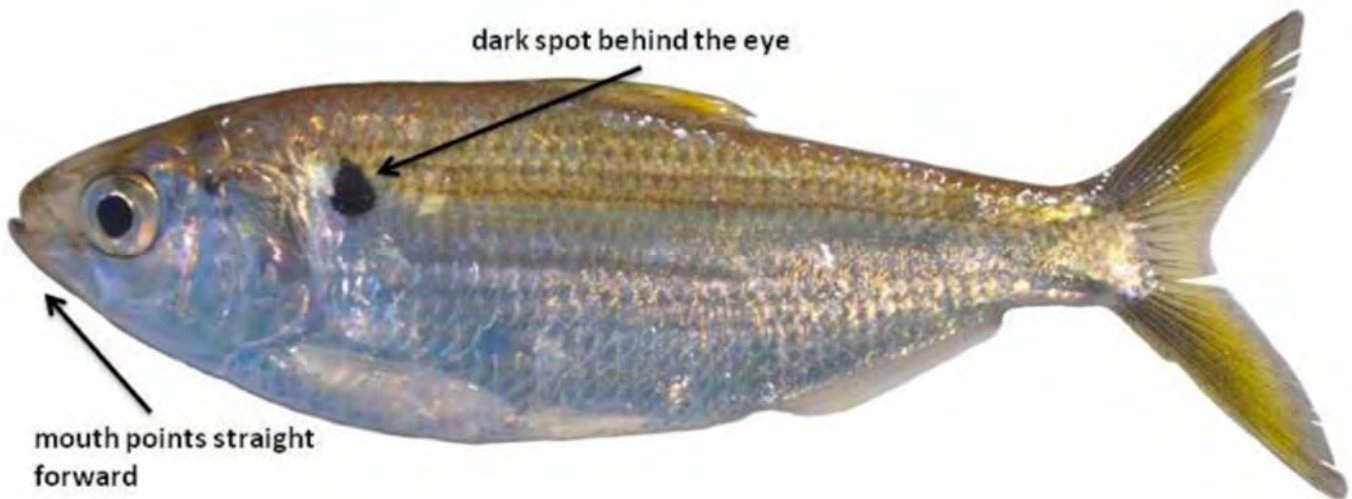
No record exists at this time.

Fishing Fact

Gizzard shad are often used as bait for catfish. Because they are difficult to keep alive, they are used mostly as cutbait. Gizzard shad are most similar to threadfin shad, but unlike threadfin shad, have a subterminal mouth (upper jaw projects well beyond the lower jaw).



Threadfin Shad (*Dorosoma petenense*)



Other Names

Yellowfin shad, Yellowtail, and Shad.

Description

Threadfin shad are similar to gizzard shad. They have a silver-blue back that changes to nearly white on their sides and belly. All fins have a yellow tint, except the dorsal fin. A black oval or round spot is located behind the head. Adults are considerably smaller than gizzard shad adults, rarely exceeding 7 inches in length.

Habits and Habitat

Threadfin shad are abundant in most of Mississippi's rivers, streams, lakes, and reservoirs. They filter feed heavily on suitably sized plant and animal material with phytoplankton and algae making up most of the diet. Spawning begins in late spring when water temperatures

reach approximately 70°F, and may continue into the summer. Spawning occurs from dawn to shortly after sunrise and the eggs are released near brush, vegetation or logs where they sink to the bottom and attach to plants and other objects. Natural hybrids with gizzard shad are not uncommon.

State Record

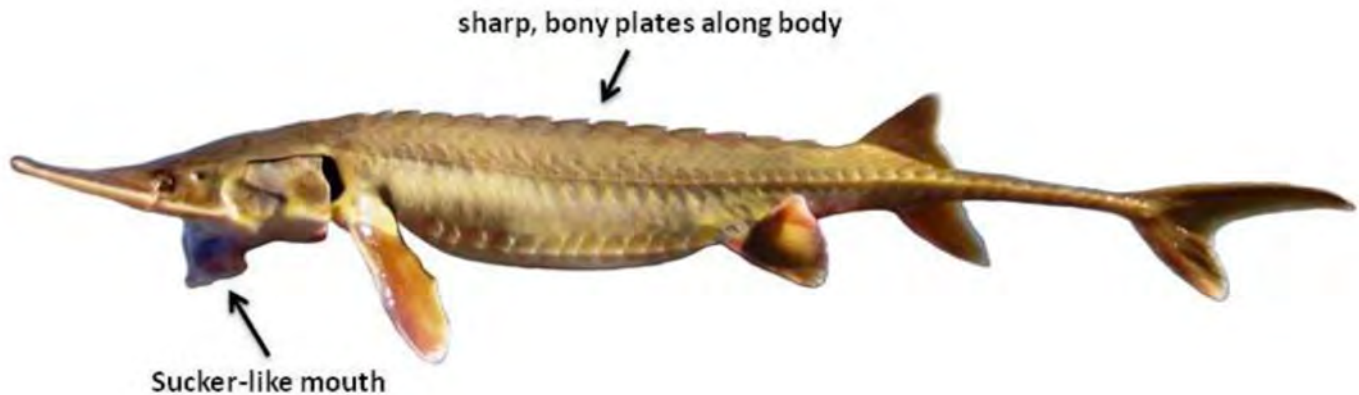
No record exists at this time.

Fishing Fact

Because of their smaller size, threadfin shad are often stocked as supplemental forage for gamefish. Threadfin shad cannot survive water temperatures below 40°F to 45°F. Winter die-offs, especially in shallow lakes and reservoirs, are common.



Shovelnose Sturgeon (*Scaphirhynchus platorynchus*)



Other Names

Hackleback sturgeon.

Description

Shovelnose sturgeon are primitive, odd-looking fish. They have several rows of sharp, bony plates along their elongated body, a strongly forked tail, spade-shaped snout, sucker-like mouth, and four barbels. Shovelnose sturgeon are normally brown or olive colored with a cream-colored belly. Average lengths of adults range from 22 to 26 inches in length. These fish are long-lived, reach sexual maturity at age 5 to 10 years, and do not spawn every year.

Habits and Habitat

Shovelnose sturgeon inhabit the Mississippi River and are normally found in deep water with moderately strong current. These fish feed on the bottom and

primarily eat aquatic insects. Spawning normally occurs in the spring when water temperatures reach 63°F to 70°F over gravel or sand substrate.

State Record

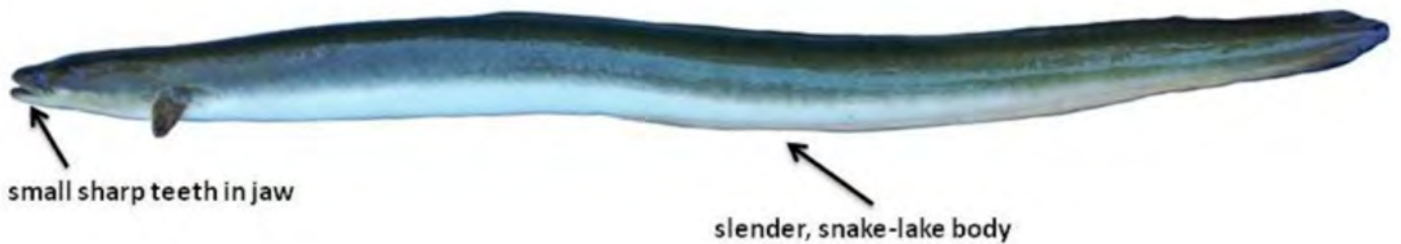
No record is possible because harvest of shovelnose sturgeon is illegal.

Fishing Fact

Shovelnose sturgeon are sometimes caught by anglers running trotlines for catfish on the Mississippi River. Though shovelnose sturgeon are abundant in the Mississippi River, and they have historically been harvested for their roe for caviar, they are currently listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as threatened due to their similarity of appearance with the endangered pallid sturgeon. Harvest of all sturgeon species is prohibited.



American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*)



Other Names

Freshwater eel, glass eel, river eel.

Description

American eel have a slender, snakelike body with very small scales. A long dorsal fin extends more than two-thirds of the body length and is continuous with the tail; pelvic fins are absent. There are numerous small, sharp teeth in the jaws. Their back may be olive-green to brown, shading to greenish-yellow on the sides, and light gray or white on the belly. American eels in Mississippi range from 10 to 29 inches in length and weigh 0.5 pounds.

Habits and Habitat

The American eel is widespread throughout Mississippi and occur in a variety of habitats. They tend to hide

under rocks during the day, and venture out only at night to feed. They feed on animal matter such as fish, crayfish, and insects.

State Record

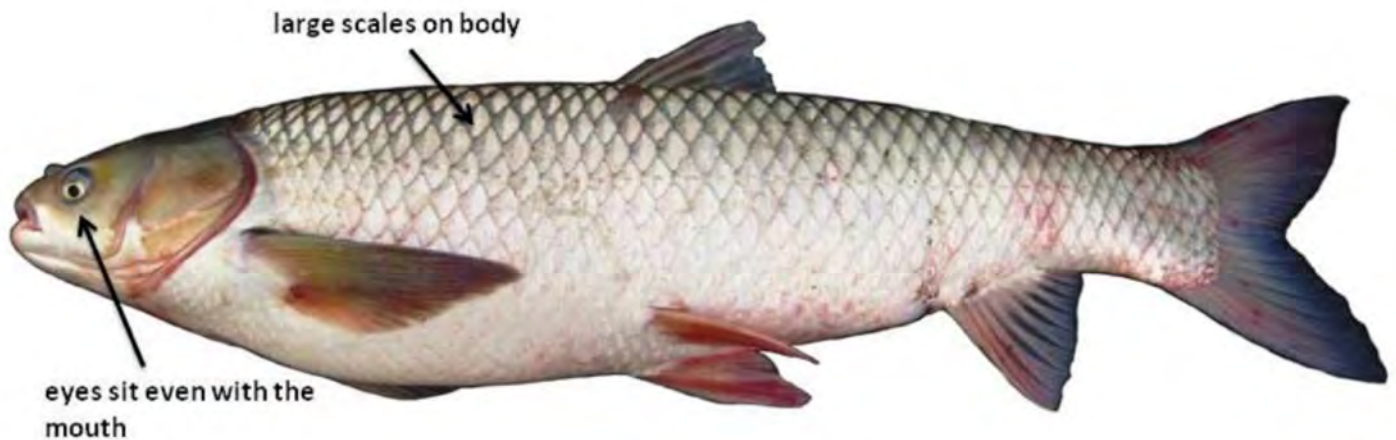
The state record of 5.06 pounds was caught in the Mississippi River by Mitch McClendon in 1994.

Fishing Fact

American eels spend most of their lives in freshwater; however, at some point, adults travel toward the Sargasso Sea, a tropical area northeast of Cuba, to spawn. Spawning occurs during the winter. Eels are usually caught by anglers fishing for something else. They are very slimy and difficult to handle.



Grass Carp (*Ctenopharyngodon idella*)



Other Names

White amur, Carp.

Description

Grass carp are one of the largest members of the minnow family. There is no keel on the belly. They have a wide mouth, a thick body, and a small, centrally positioned dorsal fin. The eyes are low on the side of the head, about even with the tip of the snout. Their back is gray to green, becoming silvery on the sides and underbody. Grass carp can reach lengths of over 4 feet and weigh over 50 pounds.

Habits and Habitat

Grass carp are native to China and were first introduced into the United States in 1963. They have been widely introduced throughout Mississippi, usually in small

lakes and ponds to control aquatic weeds. Grass carp prefer to eat submerged vegetation, but will eat terrestrial vegetation when it comes in contact with the water.

State Record

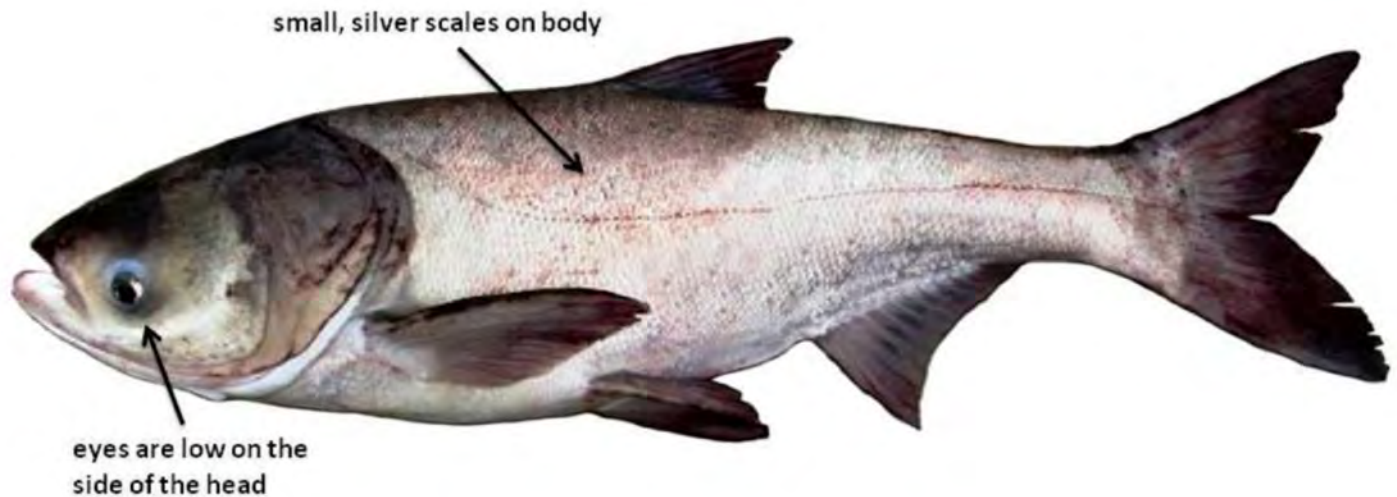
The Mississippi Rod and Reel record of 53.2 pounds was caught by Melvin Murphy in 2008. The state trophy record, harvested with a bow and arrow, is 72.7 pounds and was shot by Tony Christian in 2005.

Fishing Fact

Effective baits for catching grass carp include earthworms, small artificial baits, and doughballs. They are extremely strong swimmers and are difficult to land on light tackle.



Bighead Carp (*Hypophthalmichthys nobilis*)



Other Names

Bighead, Marbled carp, Speckled silver carp, Asian carp.

Description

Bighead carp are a deep-bodied carp with the eye located low on the head near the angle of the jaw. The back and head are olive to dark gray, becoming silvery to yellow-white on the sides and abdomen. Their body is covered with numerous dark gray to black blotches. Bighead carp can reach lengths of over 4 feet and weigh in excess of 100 pounds. As adults, bighead carp are most often confused with silver carp.

Habits and Habitat

Bighead carp were originally stocked into aquaculture facilities in combination with catfish to improve water quality and increase fish production. Bighead carp have escaped over the years to make their home in most of Mississippi's larger rivers and reservoirs. Bighead carp are primarily filter feeders, feeding on a diet that

consists of phytoplankton, detritus, zooplankton, and insect larva.

State Record

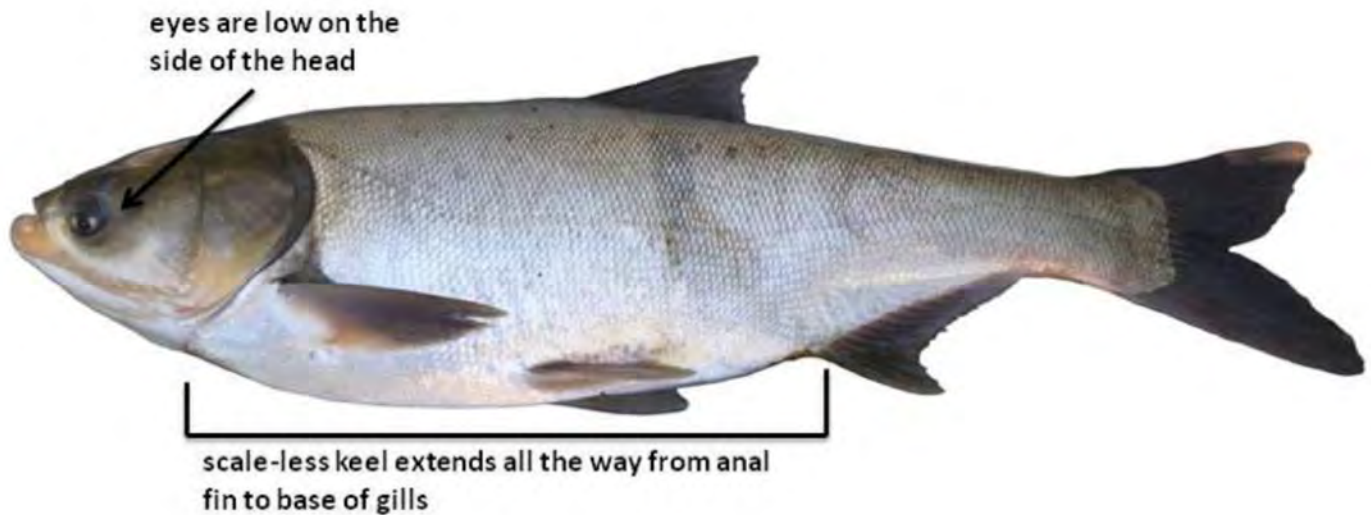
The Mississippi Rod and Reel record of 67 pounds 12 ounces was caught in lower Sardis Lake by Ron Maxwell in 2007. The state trophy record, harvested with a bow and arrow, is 89 pounds 13 ounces, and was shot by Shane Turnage in 2011.

Fishing Fact

Bighead carp are occasionally caught while fishing for other species, particularly with commercial fishing nets. The environmental impacts of these fish are unknown, but they could adversely impact many native species of fish due to competition for food. The young of both bighead and silver carp look similar to gizzard and threadfin shad, so both bighead and silver carp could be spread through the release of live bait.



Silver Carp (*Hypophthalmichthys molitrix*)



Other Names

Speckled silver carp, Asian carp, Jumping carp.

Description

Silver carp are a large, deep-bodied carp with a large eye located low on the head near the tip of the jaw. The back and upper sides are olive green, becoming silvery on the sides and abdomen. As adults, silver carp are most often confused with bighead carp. Silver carp may reach weights of 40 to 60 pounds.

Habits and Habitat

Similar to bighead carp, silver carp are native to Asia and were first imported into aquaculture facilities to improve water quality. They feed primarily on phytoplankton, small zooplankton, and other suspended organic matter.

State Record

The current record of 15 pounds was caught by Vernard Williams in 2011.

Fishing Fact

Silver carp are rarely caught using hook and line, but are commonly reported by commercial fishers. Silver carp are best known for its ability to leap up to 10 feet out of the water when disturbed by boat engine noise, and may potentially cause human injury. The environmental impacts of these fish are unknown but they could adversely impact many native species of fish due to competition for food. The young of both bighead and silver carp look similar to gizzard and threadfin shad, so both bighead and silver carp could be spread through the release of live bait.