

North Carolina Sport Fish Profiles



Bluegill

Scientific Name:

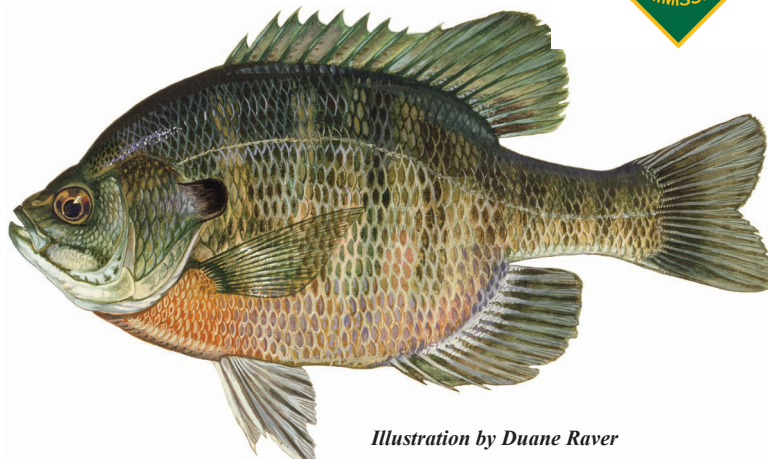
Lepomis macrochirus

Other Common Names:

bream, panfish, sunfish, copperbelly and sunny

Identification:

The bluegill is round and flat, with a distinct dark spot or smudge at the base of the dorsal fin. The ear flap is entirely black, which distinguishes it from a lot of other sunfish. Its back and upper sides are dark olive-green to black, and its belly is reddish yellow. The bluegill also has a pattern of vertical bars on the sides. During spawning season, males can be especially dark or colorful.



Habitats and Habits:

Bluegill are found throughout the United States and northern Mexico. They are the most common sunfish in North Carolina and are found in all types of habitats, except high-gradient trout streams. Bluegill are most abundant in ponds and reservoirs and are found in rivers, creeks, backwaters and swamps throughout the state. They thrive in both clear and turbid waters and can tolerate slightly acidic or saline conditions.

Bluegill eat just about anything that will fit into their small mouths, especially aquatic insects and terrestrial insects that fall into the water. Because they feed by sight, bluegill feed primarily during the daylight. They are prey to many animals, such as largemouth bass, birds and turtles.

Fishing Techniques:

The varied diet of bluegill gives anglers a wide selection of baits. While plain garden worms and crickets are the preferred baits, bluegill will hit almost any natural bait or small spinner. These scrappy fighters can be caught on a number of different lures, using a small hook (No. 10). Fly-fishing is another popular way to fish for bluegill. If you haven't caught a bluegill within 15 minutes after fishing a likely spot, move on — they probably aren't there.

Good Places to Fish:

Bluegill can be found in all 17 major river basins of North Carolina, although they are absent from cold mountain streams. Anglers should concentrate on areas near aquatic vegetation or other structure, such as brush piles, fallen logs and boat docks. Larger bluegill are often found in clear waters having moderate amounts of weed cover. Due to their abundance and hardy appetite, bluegill can be caught in just about any freshwater or brackish environment.

Other Information:

NCARP Minimum Requirements: 1 pound or 11 inches

State Record: 4 lbs., 5 oz., from Henderson County, July 27, 1967

World Record: 4 lbs., 12 oz., from Ketona Lake, Ala., April 9, 1950*

* Anglers provide information on their potential world-record catches directly to the International Game Fish Association, which maintains the world records for sport fishing.