

North Carolina Sport Fish Profiles



Redbreast sunfish

Scientific Name:

Lepomis auritus

Other Names:

robin, redbelly, yellowbelly sunfish, bream

Identification:

One of the brightest-colored sunfish, the redbreast has green-to yellow-brown sides with reddish spots and a reddish-orange belly. It has bluish streaks on its cheeks and around the eyes. The most distinguishing characteristic of this species is a long, narrow (no wider than the eye) extension of the gill cover. These flaps may exceed a length of 1 inch and are entirely black.



Habitats and Habits:

Redbreast sunfish inhabit freshwaters of eastern North America from southern Canada to Florida. Redbreast sunfish are found throughout North Carolina, except for cold mountain waters. Their diet is probably the most varied of all the sunfishes. They eat bottom-dwelling insect larvae, snails, clams, shrimp, crayfish and small fish.

Fishing Techniques:

Redbreast sunfish frequently concentrate around boulders, logs, aquatic vegetation or tree roots. They take any type of small natural bait, spinners, spoons, plugs, artificial flies and popping bugs. Use a lightweight line (under 4 lbs.), a thin, small bobber and small hooks. Unlike other sunfish, redbreast can be caught at night, using a wide variety of lures and baits.

Good Places to Fish:

Redbreast sunfish are found in most of North Carolina's major river systems with sparse populations found in the Chowan and Pasquotank rivers. As you move west across the state, populations increase until you get to the Little Tennessee, Savannah and Hiwassee rivers where the populations drop off once again. There is excellent fishing for redbreast throughout the center of the state — just find a stream with some good cover and running water and you should locate some redbreast. The Tar River from Granville County through Edgecombe County is an excellent place to start.

Other Information:

NCARP Minimum Requirements: 1 pound or 11 inches

State Record: 1 lb., 12 oz., from Big Swamp in Bladen County, May 29, 1983

World Record: 1 lb., 12 oz., from Suwannee River in Fla., May 29, 1984*

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