

North Carolina Sport Fish Profiles



Pumpkinseed

Scientific Name:

Lepomis gibbosus

Other Names:

yellow sunfish, punkys, bream

Identification:

One of the smaller sunfish, the pumpkinseed is a very colorful, chunky fish with a small mouth. Its cheek area has four to eight wavy lines that are often bright blue. The breast and belly are orange to yellow, with lighter-colored sides in a variety of bright colors. The ear flap is black but has an orange-red spot on the outer margin that is often bordered in white.



Illustration by Duane Raver

Habitats and Habits:

A native of eastern and central North America, pumpkinseed sunfish have been widely introduced in other states. In North Carolina, pumpkinseed are found in shallow areas of lakes and slow-moving rivers and prefer areas with submerged vegetation and brushy cover. They can tolerate a wide range of environmental conditions, including acidic swamp habitats and brackish estuarine waters.

Pumpkinseeds eat aquatic insects, snails, small clams and other invertebrates.

Fishing Techniques:

Fish for pumpkinseed using natural baits, such as worms, with small hooks and light lines. Small spinners and flies can also be used. Anglers should concentrate along the edges of dense vegetation or woody debris.

Good Places to Fish:

Most lakes and reservoirs in North Carolina have populations of pumpkinseed, with coastal rivers and brackish estuaries offering quality angling opportunities as well.

Other Information:

NCARP Minimum Requirements: 14 ounces or 10 inches

State Record: 1 lb.; 6 oz., from the Trent River, May 21, 2003

World Record: 1 lb.; 6 oz., Mexico, N.Y., April 27, 1985*

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