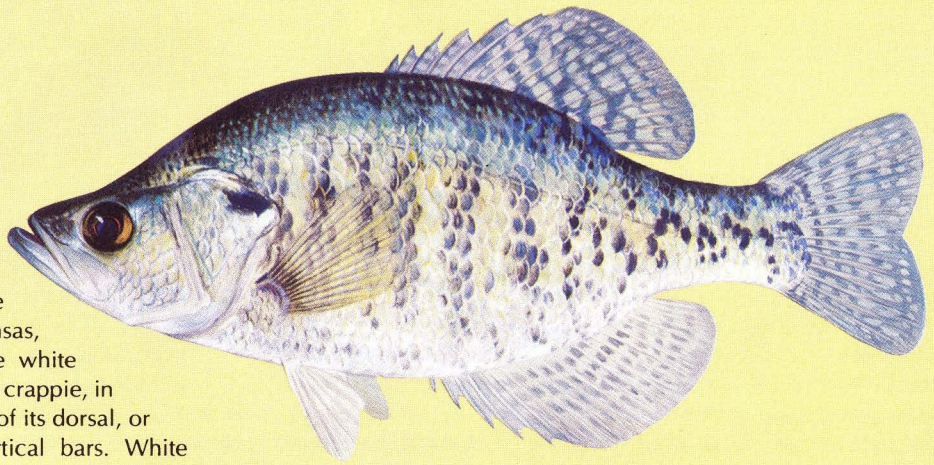


White crappie

Found in nearly all the waters of the state, the white crappie is the most common fish in Kansas, a fact that delights a lot of fishermen. The white crappie differs from its close relative, the black crappie, in having only five or six stiff spines in the front of its dorsal, or back, fin. Body markings include faint vertical bars. White crappie spend most of the year in large schools in moderately deep water off shore, but they do move into shallow water with brushy cover in the spring during spawning. Adults feed mainly on small fish, especially minnows and young gizzard shad. The current world white crappie record is five pounds, three ounces. The Kansas record is four pounds, one-quarter ounce.

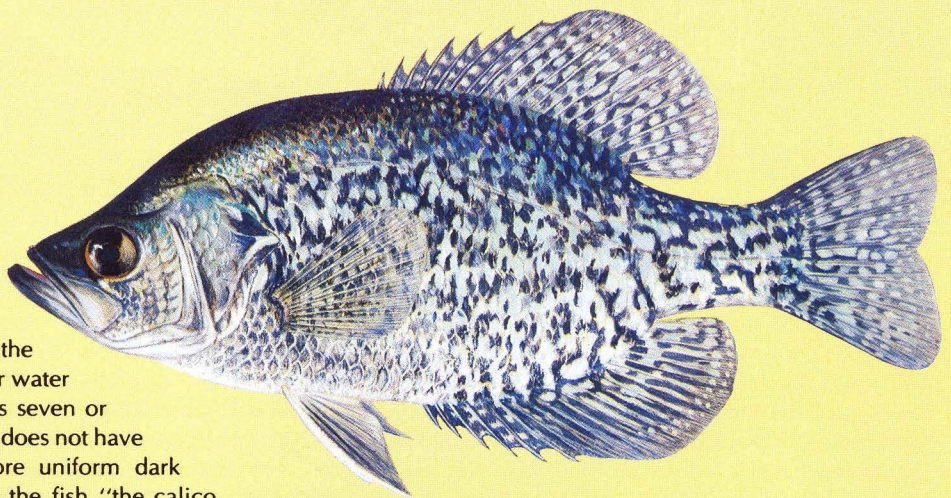


Kansas Sport Fish

Illustrations by Maynard Reece, courtesy of Iowa Conservation Commission, and by Neal Anderson.

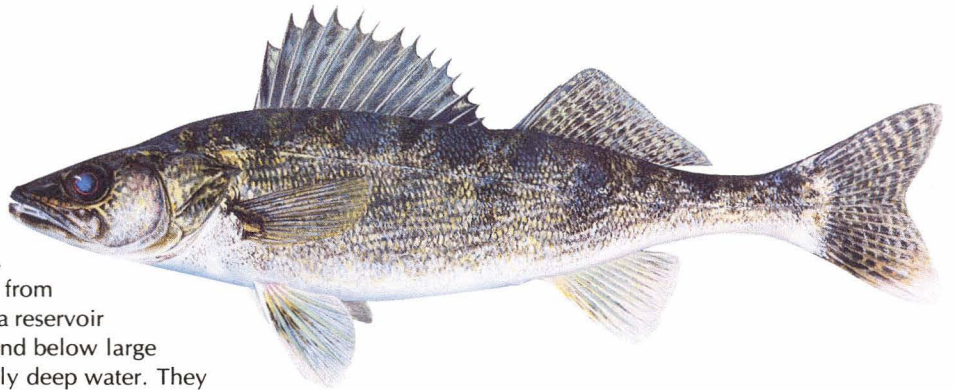
Black crappie

The black crappie is not as abundant in Kansas as the white but is often found in lakes around the state where it prefers somewhat clearer, cooler water than the white crappie. The black crappie has seven or eight stiff spines in the front of its dorsal fin and does not have the white crappie's barring. The black's more uniform dark splotching has led some anglers to nickname the fish "the calico bass." Black crappie are strictly carnivorous, feeding on smaller fish and some insects. Fishing success for both crappie species is best during spawning. World black crappie record: five pounds. Kansas record: four pounds, ten ounces.



Walleye

The separate dorsal fins, streamlined shape, and large, milky eye set the walleye apart from all other Kansas fish. The walleye is mainly a reservoir fish, found occasionally in streams above and below large lakes. Walleye are often found lying in fairly deep water. They spawn over bare rock and are often taken by fishermen on rock outcrops or over riprap along dams. Fishing the walleye spawning run is one of the toughest kinds of angling in the state since the walleye move up into the shallows in mid-March and are usually finished by early April. The walleye is universally applauded as table fare and is a fine game fish as well. The world record weighed twenty-five pounds. Kansas' best ran thirteen pounds, one ounce.



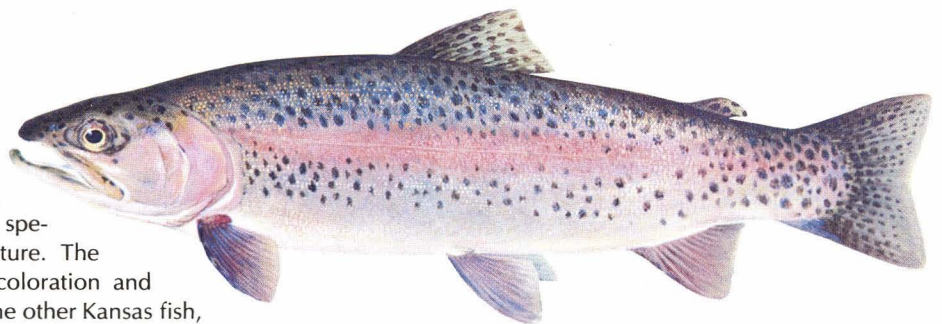
Northern pike

The torpedo profile and mouthful of sharp teeth of the northern distinguish it from all other Kansas fishes except the gar. Farther north, the northern is often found in streams and flowages, but in Kansas, it is primarily a resident of a few large lakes where it has been stocked. Northerns like clear, shallow water with plenty of emergent vegetation or submerged weeds where they ambush smaller fish. Northern eggs must be laid on flooded plant materials in order to hatch and survive. Because they are relatively uncommon, northerns aren't often caught in Kansas, but the fishermen who occasionally hook them say they'll claim your complete attention for ten or fifteen minutes. The world northern record is forty-six pounds, two ounces, and the best Kansas northern is a respectable twenty-four pounds, twelve ounces.



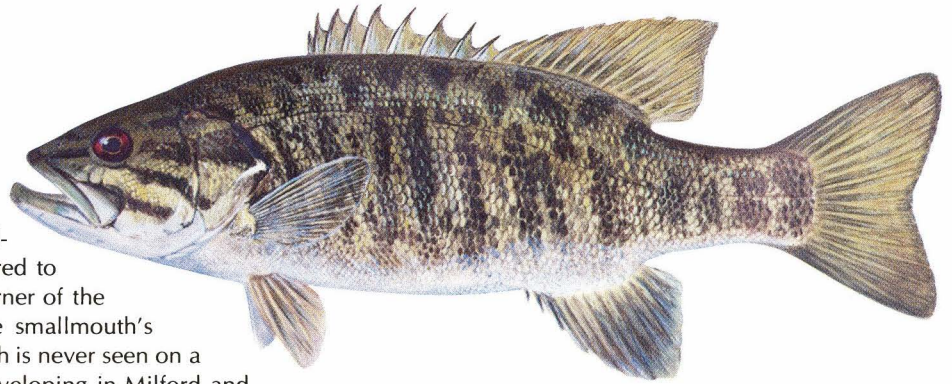
Rainbow trout

Recent introduction of rainbows by the Fish and Game Commission may establish this species as a noted Kansas trophy in the future. The rainbow can be identified by its unique coloration and small fatty fin behind the dorsal fin. Only one other Kansas fish, the brown trout, has the fatty fin and the general look of the rainbow. The brown does not have the pink flank usually seen on the rainbow, and the dark spots on the lower part of its body and toward its tail are rimmed with pink or red. Spots on the rainbow are solid brown or black and have no outer rim of color. The Fish and Game Commission has introduced rainbows in Cedar Bluff Reservoir and spillway, in Webster Reservoir spillway, below Tuttle Creek Reservoir in Tuttle Puddle and in the Rocky Ford Fishing Area, and at Wyandotte County Lake. Shawnee County officials have also maintained a substantial rainbow fishery in Shawnee County Lake. The world rainbow record is eighteen pounds, five ounces. The Kansas record stands at five pounds, twelve ounces.



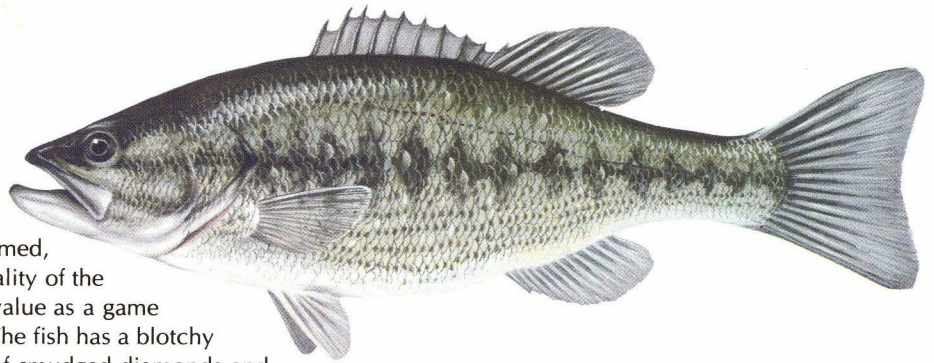
Smallmouth bass

The smallmouth is a superb game fish that prefers relatively cool, clear water. The smallmouth does not have a small mouth when compared to its warmwater cousin, the largemouth. The corner of the mouth is located just below the eye, and the smallmouth's flanks usually have a faint vertical barring which is never seen on a largemouth. Populations of smallmouth are developing in Milford and Clinton reservoirs in northeast Kansas. Lake smallmouth aren't as tied to heavy brushy cover as largemouths are. They can be found along rocky reefs and bank outcrops where they hunt crayfish. The largest smallmouth ever caught weighed eleven pounds, fifteen ounces. The Kansas record is four pounds, one ounce.



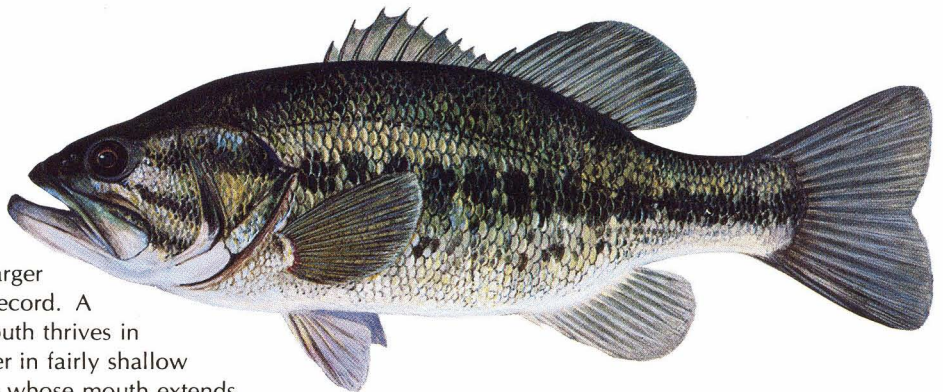
Spotted bass

The spotted bass is most common in southeastern Kansas where it inhabits the limestone-bottomed, spring-fed streams that drain the Flint Hills. The quality of the water and country it is usually found in add to its value as a game fish. The spotted bass' jaw ends just below its eye. The fish has a blotchy lengthwise stripe that sometimes looks like a row of smudged diamonds and rows of small dark spots below this stripe. The state spotted bass record is four pounds, seven ounces. The world record fish was taken in Georgia and weighed eight pounds, ten and one-half ounces.



Largemouth bass

The largemouth is the biggest of the three Kansas bass species, probably growing even larger than the eleven-pound, twelve-ounce state record. A common farm pond and lake fish, the largemouth thrives in warm, murky water usually around heavy cover in fairly shallow water. The largemouth is the only Kansas bass whose mouth extends beyond the eye. Largemouths are generally green-backed with light sides and a dusky length-wise stripe. Largemouths have broad tastes in prey and may strike anything from a live mouse to a nightcrawler. The world record largemouth weighed twenty-two pounds, four ounces and was caught in 1934—probably the longest-standing freshwater fish record in the world.



Channel catfish

The catfish can be told from other fish species by their lack of scales. The channel can be separated from its close kin by its deeply forked tail. The blue catfish looks a lot like the channel but is heavier in the body and has about thirty-two spines in its back belly fin. The channel catfish always has less than thirty.

Channels are native to all the large streams in Kansas and have been stocked in most lakes and ponds. They tolerate muddy water and wide water level variations. The world catfish record is fifty-eight pounds. Kansas' best is thirty-three pounds, twelve ounces. The world record blue cat is ninety-seven pounds, although there are commercial fishing records that run larger. The Kansas record is forty-seven pounds, twelve ounces.



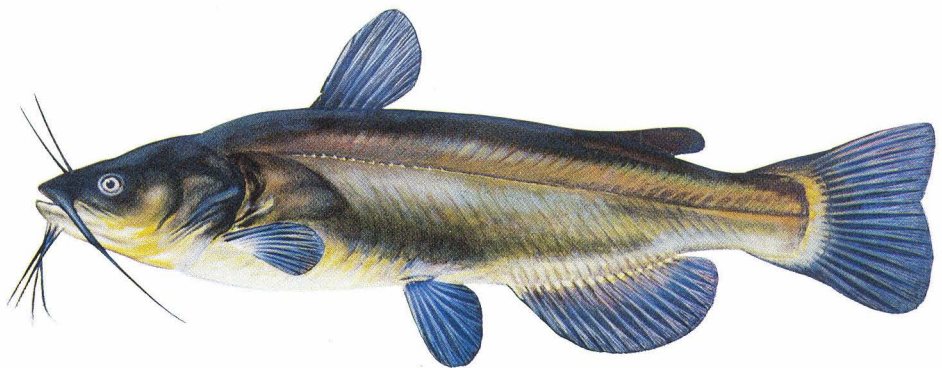
Flathead catfish

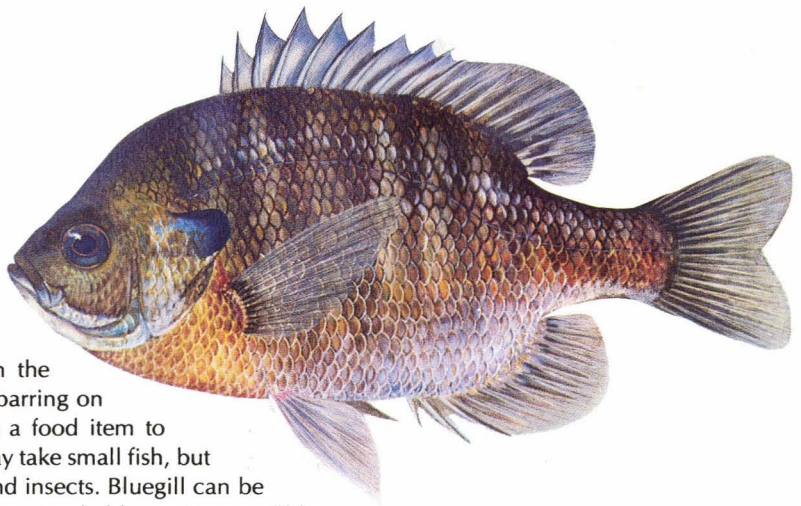
The flathead *does* have a broad, flat head with a jutting lower jaw. Young fish are black but become mottled with yellow and brown as they grow. Really big adults are often solid yellow-brown. Flatheads prefer deep holes in streams and the spillways of reservoirs where they grow to enormous size, sometimes more than 100 pounds. They are strict predators and do not scavenge like channel catfish or bullheads. The world hook-and-line record for flatheads is seventy-nine pounds, eight ounces. Ray Weichert of Brazilton, Kansas took the best Kansas flathead on record with a sunfish-baited trotline. It weighed eighty-six pounds, three ounces.



Black bullhead

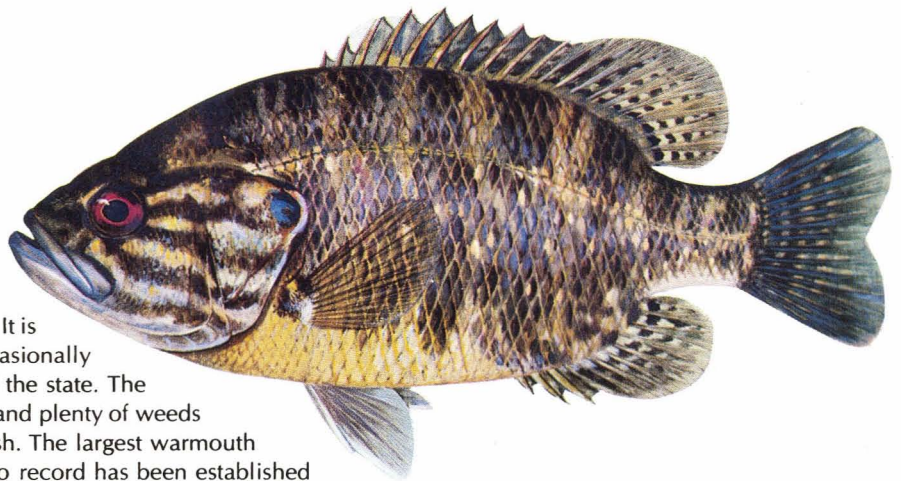
This relatively small catfish does not have a forked tail. It frequents calm, murky water usually over a mud bottom and is seldom found in clearer, faster flowing streams. This species can be separated from its close relative, the yellow bullhead, by the color of the barbels on the underside of the chin. Barbels on the black bullhead are darker than the skin immediately above them. On the yellow bullhead, they are usually white or cream-colored, always lighter than the skin above them. The yellow bullhead is also found in different habitat, preferring clear, permanently-flowing streams with rocky bottoms. The world-record black bullhead weighed eight pounds. The Kansas record came from a southeastern Kansas strip pit and weighed five pounds.





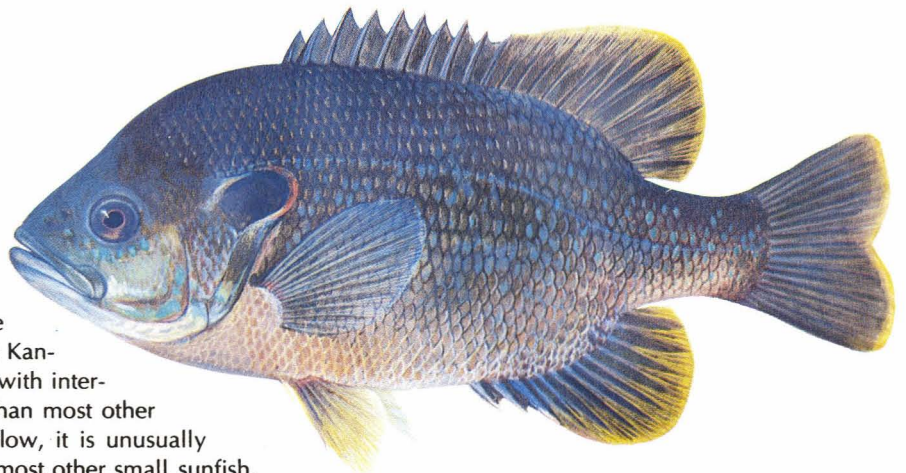
Bluegill

The small mouth and blue-tipped tab on the gill cover are unique bluegill traits. The bluegill's body is rounder than the green sunfish's or warmouth's, and often has faint vertical barring on its side. The bluegill is a prolific fish that is important as a food item to predators like bass as well as to fishermen. Large bluegill may take small fish, but the bulk of the species' diet consists of small crustaceans and insects. Bluegill can be caught almost any time of day at any time of year, but they are probably most susceptible on their spawning beds in May. A similar species not shown is the redear sunfish. The redear has more bronze coloration on its body and a red "ear" flap on the gill cover. The world bluegill record is four pounds, twelve ounces; the Kansas record is two pounds, five ounces.



Warmouth

This yellowish brown panfish has red eyes and a mouth that is considerably larger than the bluegill's. It is found mainly in eastern Kansas lakes, but may occasionally turn up in sluggish streams in the southeast part of the state. The warmouth prefers ponds with soft, muddy bottoms and plenty of weeds where it feeds on insects, crustaceans and small fish. The largest warmouth on record weighed two pounds, twelve ounces. No record has been established for Kansas.

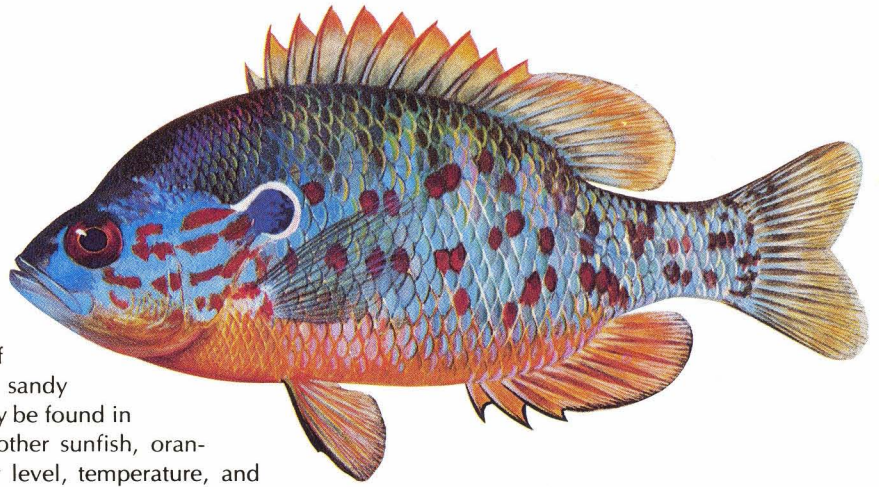


Green sunfish

The green body, large mouth, and usual yellow-edged fins are the key identifying marks of the green sunfish, a very abundant species throughout Kansas. The green sunfish favors small, muddy creeks with intermittent flows and pioneers farther up drainages than most other fishes. Caught in pools by sudden decreases in flow, it is unusually adept at surviving until the stream recovers. Like most other small sunfish, green sunfish can easily overpopulate a small impoundment, overtax food supply, and produce large numbers of stunted offspring. Properly managed, they are a fine little game fish, especially for young anglers. The world record green sunfish weighed two pounds, two ounces and was taken by Louis Ferlo in the strip pits of southeast Kansas.

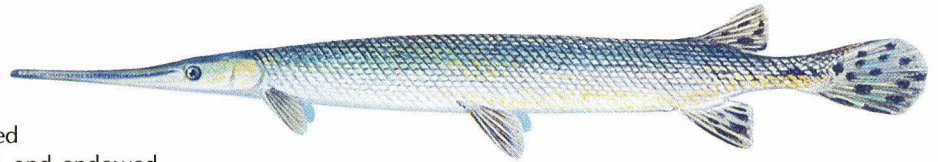
Orangespot sunfish

The orangespot sunfish is easily the most colorful of the Kansas sunfish. Orangespots seem to favor sandy streams but have a wide tolerance in habitat and may be found in rock- or mud-bottomed water as well. Like most other sunfish, orangespots can handle extensive fluctuations in water level, temperature, and turbidity. They are mainly insect eaters and do not get big enough to be important game fish. No Kansas record has been established for this species; the world record is one pound.



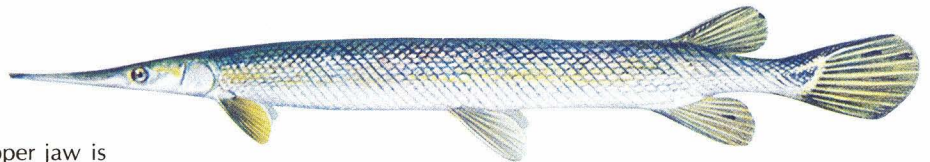
Longnose gar

The gars are primitive fishes, torpedo shaped and toothy, possessing lungs as well as gills, and endowed with an incredible toughness. The longnose gar can be separated from its relatives by the length of its beak, which is always more than twice as long as the rest of its head. It is the most abundant of the three gar species in Kansas and is found in most streams in the eastern half of the state. Strict predators, gar can be caught on spinners with nylon floss substituted for hooks. The Kansas gar record is thirty-one pounds, eight ounces. The world record stands at fifty pounds, five ounces.



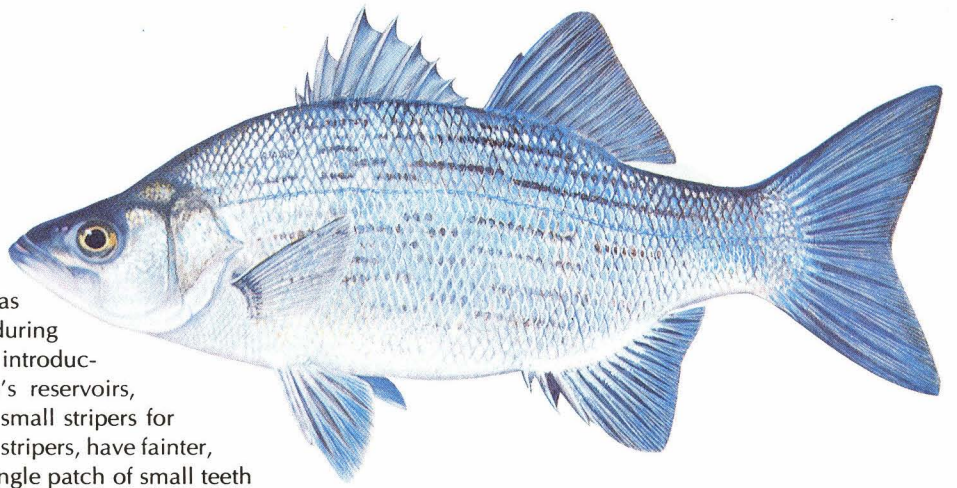
Shortnose gar

The shortnose gar's jaws are less than twice the length of the rest of its head, and the upper jaw is wider than the diameter of the eye throughout its length. The shortnose has been found only in Kansas' larger rivers where it avoids the quiet backwaters and oxbows that are often occupied by longnose or spotted gar. The shortnose can be distinguished from the third Kansas gar, the spotted gar, by the absence of dark, rounded spots on its head. The spotted gar is usually found only in the extreme southeast corner of the state. The world shortnose gar record is three pounds, five and one-quarter ounces. No record has been established for the spotted gar.



White bass

White bass occur in large schools in most Kansas reservoirs and can be caught by the dozens during their spring spawning runs. Since the recent introductions of striped bass into some of the state's reservoirs, biologists feel that anglers may be mistaking small stripers for white bass. White bass are deeper bodied than stripers, have fainter, more broken lengthwise stripes, and have a single patch of small teeth on their tongues. Kansas' current state record—five pounds, four ounces—was also the world record for a number of years until it was broken in 1972 by a five pound, five ounce catch in California.

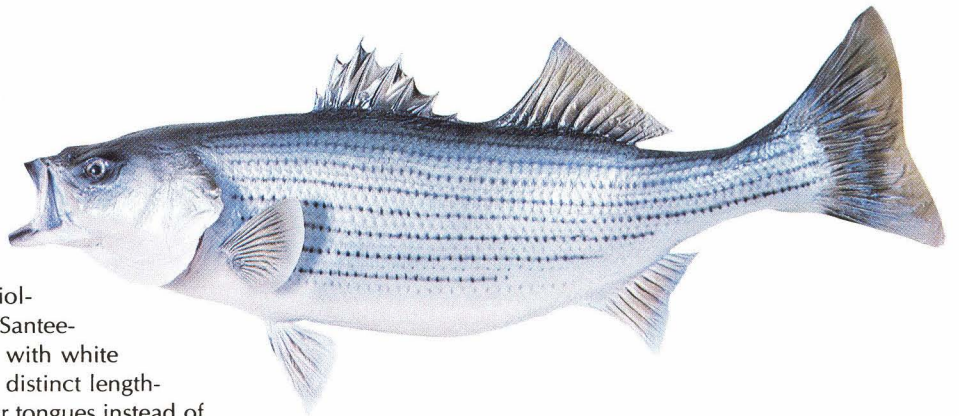


Wiper

Kansas biologists have also introduced a striped-white bass hybrid in some of the state's reservoirs. The wiper can be distinguished from its parents by the combination of its relatively deep body and two rows of teeth on its tongue. Like many hybrids, wipers seem to combine many of the best attributes of both parents. They get bigger than white bass and adapt to Kansas reservoir conditions better than stripers. The current world wiper record is eighteen pounds.

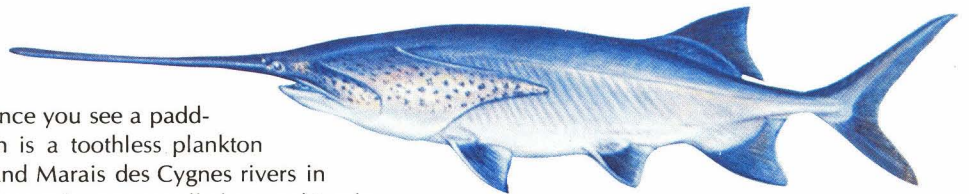
Striped bass

A saltwater native, the striped bass began an inland odyssey when South Carolina fisheries biologists found it was surviving landlocked in Santee-Cooper Reservoir. Stripers have been confused with white bass, although they are more streamlined, have distinct lengthwise stripes, and have two rows of teeth on their tongues instead of the white bass' single row. Stripers estimated at fifty pounds have been reported in Kansas, but the current state record is thirty-three pounds, twelve ounces. The world freshwater record is fifty pounds, four ounces.



Paddlefish

Also called spoonbill for obvious reasons. Once you see a paddlefish, you'll never forget it. The paddlefish is a toothless plankton feeder common today only in the Neosho and Marais des Cygnes rivers in eastern Kansas. Because of its food habits, this species can usually be caught only by snagging. Although paddlefish do well in reservoirs, they must migrate upstream into flowing water. As a result, they often concentrate below dams in large numbers. Fishermen who enjoy the snagging say that it is the best chance a Kansas angler has of hooking a really big fish and that the paddlefish is easy to clean and good to eat. No world paddlefish record has been established because current regulations bar fish that have been snagged. The Kansas record is seventy-four pounds, eight ounces.



Bigmouth buffalo

The bigmouth buffalo is the only member of the sucker family that has a large, thin-lipped mouth that opens nearly straight forward. Buffalo are seldom caught on hook and line since they are plankton feeders. Bigmouth buffalo occur in rivers in the eastern part of the state, but they are most common in lakes where they prefer silt or sand bottoms. The smaller-mouthed, darker black buffalo is found often in riffles or fast runs of eastern Kansas streams, as well as in lakes. The smallmouth buffalo with its sucker-like mouth is also found through most of eastern Kansas. Scott Butler of Lawrence currently holds the world smallmouth buffalo record with a fifty-one pound catch. The world bigmouth buffalo record is fifty-six pounds; the Kansas record stands at fifty-four pounds, four ounces.



Carp

The pair of barbels at each corner of the mouth and the sawtoothed spine at the leading edge of the dorsal fin are key identification marks of the carp. The carp was introduced in Kansas in 1880. Its hog-like feeding habits increase turbidity in the streams, lakes, and marshes in which it is found, and it tends to root out aquatic vegetation that would otherwise be attractive to waterfowl. Carp can be caught on a variety of baits, and those anglers who overcome the widely accepted prejudice against the fish report that they are powerful fighters and tasty when prepared properly.



Drum

The drum can be identified by its arched back, straight belly line and rounded tail. A common fish in eastern Kansas rivers and most impoundments in the state, the drum is a surprisingly mysterious fish. Very little is known of its breeding behavior. Its name is derived from the booming noise it makes which is thought to relate to reproduction in some way.

