

RECOMMENDED READING:

The Fishes of Missouri

ublished by Missouri Department of Conservation, 1997
uthor: William Pflieger

Wood Life

ublished by Golden Book Press, Western Publishing Company,
967.
uthor: George Reid et. al.

Fishes of the Central United States

ublished by University of Kansas Press, 1990.
uthor: Joseph Tomelleri and Mark Eberle

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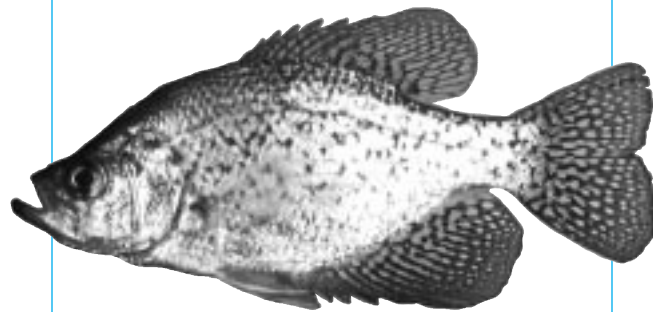
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FISHES

FOREST PARK



Many types of fish are scattered throughout Forest Park. At least 25 species of fish are present in the linear waterway and Jefferson and Deer Lakes. Most of these species are native to Missouri and were introduced to Forest Park after aquatic habitats were improved.

These fish provide many benefits to park users. Many types of fish (sunfish and top minnows) eat insect larvae.

HABITAT

Forest Park's lakes and streams include many different types of aquatic habitat. Most of these habitats exist due to extensive renovation of the old lagoon and some lakes. These new habitats make it possible for many fish to survive where they couldn't in the past.

Reconnecting the old lagoon created a stream-like waterway that now includes habitats like riffles, runs, pools, and backwaters. Riffles are very shallow (less than 2'), but have swift current. Turbulence from water rushing over rocks add oxygen to the water. Riffles are also used as spawning areas by many fish. Look for darters here. Runs, or chutes, have intermediate depth (2'-6') and moderate to swift current. Larger fish either live near cover (logs or boulders) or feed on insects from the bottom of the stream. Redhorse suckers and many types of shiners use these habitats.

Pools are the deepest part of a stream and have little current. Usually, the biggest fish spend most of their time in pools near cover like logs, brush, weeds, or rocks. Bass, catfish, and crappie commonly use pools. Backwaters, or sloughs, are formed adjacent to the stream, but still connect. No current exists and backwaters usually have a lot of aquatic vegetation. Fish that do not like current and young fish seeking escape from predators live here. Over time, backwaters may lose their connection with the stream through siltation and become a wetland. Backwaters are good places to find top minnows and bluegills.

Lakes like Jefferson and Deer lakes have shoreline, near-shore, and deep-water habitats. Shoreline habitat is nearest to the shore, usually shallow (less than 3'), and allows

Their keen eyesight and ability to survive in shallow water make them excellent mosquito predators. Sunfish, like bluegill, offer observers good opportunities to view spawning behavior, including a very active defense of their nest. Several species, like bass and catfish, provide good recreational fishing opportunities from Deer Lake to Jefferson Lake (including the linear waterway).

sunshine to reach the lake bottom. Most plant and insect growth takes place in this area and it is a very active area for fish. Fish feed heavily upon insects and young fish escape from predators here. But, predators occasionally sneak along the shoreline for a tasty snack! Most fish spawning also takes place near shoreline habitats. Look for bluegill and small bass along shoreline areas. Near-shore habitats (3'-6') usually don't allow sunshine to reach the lake bottom. It is here many fish spend much of summer and fall. During summer's heat, near-shore areas provide the delicate balance of enough oxygen and cooler water. Catfish, carp, and larger bass spend much time near-shore.

Fish use deep-water habitats during winter. These areas offer the warmest water in winter and fish readily use it. In summer, deep-water habitats rarely have enough oxygen to allow fish to breathe and little food is available. Most fish retreat to deep-water habitats in winter.

A transitional area between near-shore and deep-water habitats is the thermocline. This thin layer of water separates the cool, poorly oxygenated water of the lake bottom from the warm water with high oxygen content on the surface. In spring (and again in fall), as surface and bottom water temperatures become equal, the lake turns over. This natural process mixes nutrients and oxygen. It is a healthy part of the lake ecosystem.

Most fish that live in Forest Park were originally introduced (stocked). Now, however, the majority maintain their numbers through natural reproduction (spawning) in the Park's renovated aquatic habitats so stocking is no longer necessary.

ARGEMOUTH BASS

Micropterus salmoides



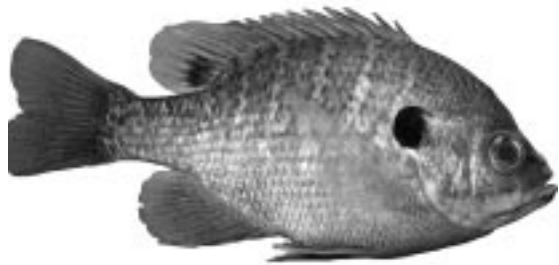
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The 'Bucketmouth' is the top aquatic predator in Forest Park and member of the sunfish family. Its large mouth and good sight makes it an effective predator on fish, insects, frogs, snakes, and even small ducks. Largemouth bass prefer calm water areas like logs, weeds, or rock. The cunning and teamwork of largemouth bass help make them Missouri's most sought-after fish by anglers.

BLUEGILL

Lepomis macrochirus

Bluegill get their name from the powder-blue color on their opercular gill plate. This color becomes very pronounced in spawning males. Their small mouth, keen eyesight, and aggressive behavior make them top-notch insect eaters. When



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Bluegill are present, mosquitoes are usually kept in check. You can see and hear them popping insects off the water surface. Spawning bluegill spawning can be fun and easy. Just look for the saucer-shaped depressions in the lake or stream bottom during May or June. Male bluegill cleaned these 'nests' for egg deposition and will aggressively defend it.



Photo by Wydoski & Whitney

CHANNEL CATFISH

Ictalurus punctatus

'Mr. Whiskers' is Missouri's official state fish and is very popular. The 'whiskers,' or barbels, give catfish their name and are covered with taste buds to help catfish feed. Although these barbels can not 'sting' people, the sharp spines in their side (pectoral) and top (dorsal) fins can easily pierce a person's skin and cause a painful wound. So, handle catfish carefully! Channel catfish are not fussy feeders and will eat just about anything, plant or animal, living or dead.



Photo by Scarola

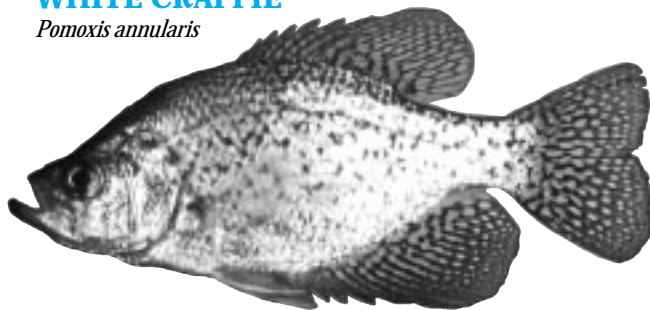
GOLDEN SHINER

Notemigonus crysoleucas

Golden shiners are frequently gold in color, but they may also be bright silver or yellow-brown. They inhabit quiet, weedy areas of rivers and lakes, and tend to school in mid-water or near the water surface. Their favorite foods are zooplankton, aquatic insects, and algae. In turn, golden shiners are a favorite food of bass and crappie. For that reason, commercial fish farms commonly raise golden shiners to be used as bait.

WHITE CRAPPIE

Pomoxis annularis



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The compressed build of crappie makes them well-suited for life in submerged brush. They are able to glide between branches to get their favorite food (small fish), while escaping predators. Crappie avoid flowing water, so they can usually be found in lakes, backwaters, and slower pools. Crappie are a favorite of anglers, and if you've ever eaten them, you know why!

COMMON CARP

Cyprinus carpio



Photo by Scarola

Common carp are not native to the United States and were introduced from Europe in the late 1800s. Once introduced, like many exotics, they flourished and are now present in most of Missouri's streams and large lakes. Carp have a down-turned, sucker-like mouth that they use to root along the bottom (muddying the water) for small insects and mussels. Carp prefer lakes or pools with sluggish flow and a lot of brush. Spawning behavior that includes violent splashing in shallow water vegetation can be quite a show in early spring.

BLACKSTRIPED TOPMINNOW

Fundulus notatus

Topminnows have upturned mouths that help them skim the water surface for their favorite food — insects. They are especially good insect larvae predators and ideally suited to control mosquitoes. Topminnows are usually found near shores of streams, backwaters, or lakes, and like to be near aquatic vegetation.



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GOLDEN REDHORSE

Moxostoma erythrurum



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The golden redhorse, like most suckers, is a bottom dweller. Its down-turned, suction-like mouth vacuums the stream or lake bottom for insects, mussels, and algae. Unlike most other redhorse that thrive in very swift water, golden redhorse prefers slower stream pools and runs.

REGULATIONS

Although fish watching is enjoyable, fishing is still the most common way for people to encounter fish. To maintain the delicate balance of Forest Park's aquatic communities, fishing regulations have been established by the Missouri Department of Conservation. If you are going to fish, please follow these fishing regulations:

- Public fishing available from Deer Lake through the linear waterway into, and including, Jefferson Lake.
- All anglers between ages of 15 and 65 must have a valid Missouri fishing permit.
- Each angler may use no more than 3 fishing poles.
- Anglers wanting to harvest trout must have a valid Missouri trout permit.

SPECIES	MINIMUM LENGTH LIMIT	DAILY LIMIT
Largemouth bass	18"	2
Channel catfish	None	4
Crappie	None	15
Rainbow trout	None	5
Common carp	None	4
All other fish combined	None	10