

Ontario's Warmwater Gamefish

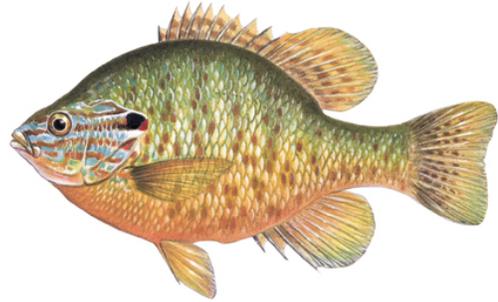


Pumpkinseed (*Lepomis gibbosus*)

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The pumpkinseed's body is deep and compressed. It is very brightly colored with a green to olive back and often a bright red to red-orange belly. The sides also have bright orange spots. Pumpkinseeds can be easily confused with bluegills. The distinguishing feature is that the pumpkinseed has a well-defined red spot on the tip of the gill plate.

Common Names: pumpkinseed, common sunfish, sunfish, sunny



Habitat of the Pumpkinseed

Occurs in most lakes and rivers of Southern Ontario and as far north as Lake Nipissing and some waters in western Ontario in the Lake of the Woods area. The preferred habitat is small lakes and ponds with clear water but can be found in weedy bays of larger lakes. These fish are usually found schooling in weedy areas or around submerged trees. The preferred water temperature is between 18-24 °C (65-75 °F).

Spawning Patterns of the Pumpkinseed

Spawning occurs in late spring and early summer. Males construct a nest in depths shallower than 30 cm (12") usually in areas with lots of submerged vegetation. Spawning begins when the water temperature reaches 20 °C (68 °F). Males spawn in the same nest several times with multiple females. An average female may lay as many eggs as 3,000 with the average being between 1,500 and 3,000. The eggs hatch in as little as three days and the males guard the nest for up to 12 days. When the fry leave the nest, the males make ready to spawn again.

The Diet of the Pumpkinseed

The diet is primarily composed of small aquatic insects including dragonfly nymphs, ants and mayfly nymphs. Pumpkinseed feed off the surface and on the bottom.

Age and Growth Ranges of the Pumpkinseed

In Ontario waters pumpkinseed can live 8-10 years and grow to a length of 25 cm (10") and to a weight of 11 ounces. In small lakes and ponds with good numbers of fish, a stunting effect may occur where a length of 10-12 cm (4-5") may be the maximum.

Tips on Fishing for Pumpkinseed

The pumpkinseed is often an overlooked game fish by many anglers, but they are quite popular among young anglers due to the abundance and availability. The white flaky flesh has a sweet taste. When light tackle is used, pumpkinseed provide a good fight. Use small spinners or angle with a bobber and live bait combination; smaller is typically better. Angle around weeds or sunken trees and hang on for some great action and tasty eating.

