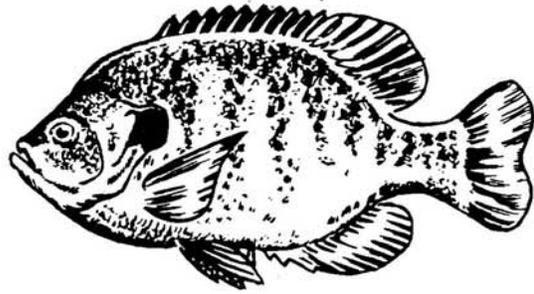


BLUEGILL SUNFISH



In the State of Oregon

The bluegill sunfish (*Lepomis macrochirus*) is a popular warm water game fish and is common in many Oregon locations. The best identifying characteristics are the short head, small pug-shaped mouth, three-spined anal fin, solid dark gill patch and black smudge-like spot on the dorsal fin. The sizes useful to fishermen are about five to six ounces in weight and over six inches in length. Occasionally, bluegills found in ponds weigh up to a pound and a half. Bluegills are prolific spawners and soon overpopulate ponds if left unchecked by bass or other predatory fish.

HABITAT NEEDS

Water. Fertile, nonturbid, stable water is best for bluegill growth and activity. These fish spawn in late spring or early summer when afternoon temperatures reach 72°F to 80°F. The male fish prepares the nest in shallow water in sandy or silty areas. After eggs are deposited by the female, the male guards the eggs and resulting fry. Many bluegill nests are found in a relatively small area.

Food. The adult bluegill makes its best growth in the spring before spawning. Insects, small fish (even its own fry), and most any other animal matter in the water make up the bluegill diet. Bluegills do not readily accept artificial food; therefore, production is limited to the natural environment which can be improved through use of inorganic fertilizers. A voracious appetite makes this fish readily available to fishermen and a favorite for young and old folks alike.

MANAGEMENT

Stocking. In ponds of average natural fertility, stock 50 bass and 500 bluegills per surface acre. Ponds that are maintained at a high rate of fertility can be stocked with 100 bass and 1000 bluegills per surface acre. It is a serious mistake to stock at the higher rate if you do not fertilize the pond adequately year after year.

The annual yield by fishing can be predicted safely as follows:

100 to 200 pounds per acre from the fertile pond.

15 to 35 pounds per acre from the natural waters.

15 to 20 pounds per acre if bass are stocked without the bluegills to feed them.

Bluegill fingerlings are stocked as early as possible in the fall, usually in August through October. Bass fingerlings about two inches in length are stocked the following June.

When stocking warm water species which have been obtained from wild populations or by seining other ponds, care is needed to prevent planting unwanted species which may complicate pond management.

Fishing. It is usually a good idea to wait until June or July of the year after stocking to begin fishing. The bass should have spawned by then. The pugnacious behavior of the pan fishes makes them easy to catch by a variety of methods.

Other pan fish closely related to the bluegill and having similar habits include the green sunfish, pumpkinseed and longear sunfish.

Management problems include keeping the population of these fish in balance so that usable size fish are produced through predator fish such as bass, by fishing, or preferably by a combination of both.

If large bluegills are desired do not catch many of the bass.

Additional reference: WARM WATER FISH PONDS; Farmers Bulletin
No. 2250; U.S. Department of Agriculture

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