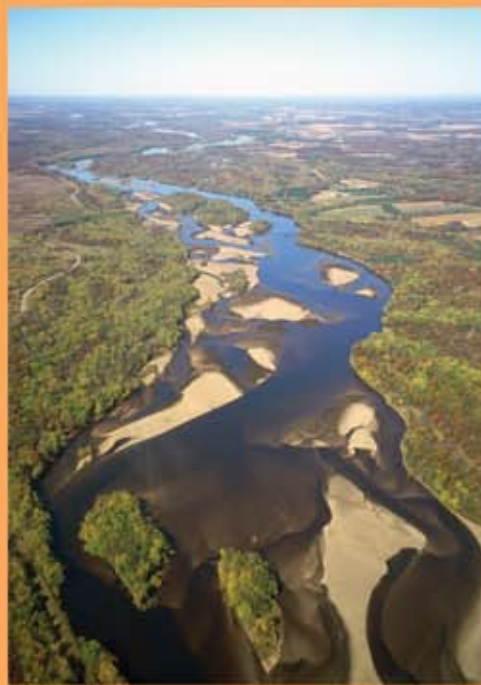


# Rare & Unusual Fishes of the LOWER WISCONSIN RIVER



shovelnose sturgeon 3.5 ft.



**RIVER HABITATS CHANGE RAPIDLY** as flowing waters build and reduce sandbars. Sometimes sandbars survive to become forested islands. River flow becomes *braided* around the islands where fallen trees line the shore and become magnets for insects, birds, turtles and fish.



**BACKWATER SLOUGHS AND OXBOWS FORM** when braided channels are cut off from the river. They are nurseries for some river fish, and home for others that avoid fast currents. The fishes in the sloughs and oxbows depend on clean waters that arise from springs and tributaries far beyond the floodplain.



Slough



starhead topminnow 1 ft.



**H**OME TO 98 SPECIES OF FISH, THE LOWER WISCONSIN RIVER is one of the most ecologically diverse large river systems in the United States. This section of the river flows from Prairie du Sac west across the unglaciated Driftless Area to the Mississippi River.

THE DIVERSE ARRAY OF FISH AND OTHER ANIMALS in this protected 92-mile Lower Wisconsin State Riverway reflects the intricate connections of the free-flowing river with its floodplain lakes.



grass pickerel 15 ft.

SHIFTING SAND MAKES A HARSH ENVIRONMENT FOR MANY ANIMALS but important niches for others. The *western sand darter* dives into the sand to escape predators while the primitive armored mayfly burrows near the sandy shores. The river hosts many unusual and rare fish, such as the *shoal chub*, *crystal darter*, *bullhead minnow*, *starhead topminnow*, *primitive lampreys*, *gars*, *paddlefish*, and *shovelnose sturgeon*.



highfin carpoucker 15 ft.



longnose gar 4.5 ft.



fathead catfish 4.5 ft.



sauger 5 ft.



bowfin 3.5 ft.



blue sucker 1.5 ft.



paddlefish 3.5 ft.



western sand darter 3.5 ft.



weed darter 2 ft.



rock darter 4 ft.



shoal chub 3 ft.



bullhead minnow 2 ft.



The river darter has cryptic coloration that helps camouflage it. 3.2 ft.