

A Key to Common Wisconsin Fish

Adapted from a fish key by WDNR Fisheries Biologist Steve Gilbert

1. a. Body has no large bony plates Go to #2
b. Body has several rows of large bony plates. Face has whiskers (barbels) and a sucker-like mouth **Lake Sturgeon**
2. a. One dorsal fin; no adipose fin Go to #3
b. Two dorsal fins that may be separated or joined and have distinct spines and soft rays; or may have one dorsal fin and an adipose fin Go to #7
3. a. Dorsal fin is short, much less than half the body length Go to #4
b. Dorsal fin is nearly half the body length or longer **Bowfin**
4. a. Teeth are very visible and sharp (Pike Family) Go to #5
b. Teeth are not visible; mouth is fleshy and sucker-like **White Sucker**
5. a. Tips of tail fin are rounded Go to #6
b. Tips of tail fin are pointed **Muskellunge**
6. a. Cheek and gill cover are fully scaled **Grass Pickerel**
b. Cheek and only upper half of gill cover are scaled **Northern Pike**
7. a. Adipose fin is present Go to #8
b. Adipose fin is absent Go to #19
8. a. Whiskers (barbels) are present Go to #9
b. Whiskers are absent Go to #13
9. a. Tail is rounded or slightly indented Go to #10
b. Tail is deeply forked **Channel Catfish**
10. a. Lower jaw does not protrude beyond upper jaw Go to #11
b. Lower jaw protrudes beyond upper jaw. Body has patchy, mottled markings **Flathead Catfish**
11. a. Anal fin has 15-24 rays; barbels are gray to black; tail fin is squarish and slightly notched Go to #12
b. Anal fin has 24-27 rays; barbels are whitish; tail fin rounded **Yellow Bullhead**
12. a. Side is mottled; pectoral fin spine has strong saw-like "teeth" **Brown Bullhead**
b. Side is not mottled; pectoral fin spine is "toothless" or has poorly developed "teeth" **Black Bullhead**

A Key to Common Wisconsin Fish

- 13. a. Tail is deeply forked Go to #14
 b. Tail is only slightly forked or is not forked Go to #16
- 14. a. Mouth is not turned down Go to #15
 b. Mouth is turned down **Lake Whitefish**
- 15. a. Back and sides are densely-mottled **Lake Trout**
 b. Back and sides are not densely-mottled (scattered instead) **Coho Salmon**
- 16. a. Back lacks worm-like markings; lower fins lack white edge Go to #17
 b. Back has worm-like markings; lower fins have white edge **Brook Trout**
- 17. a. Lower fins are not speckled Go to #18
 b. Lower fins are speckled **Chinook Salmon**
- 18. a. Lateral line is pink and prominent **Rainbow Trout**
 b. Lateral line is not pink or prominent **Brown Trout**
- 19. a. Anal fin has two or fewer spines on leading edge (Perch Family) Go to #20
 b. Anal fin has three or more spines on leading edge (Sunfish Family) Go to #22
- 20. a. Teeth are not noticeable; tail lacks white tip Go to #21
 b. Teeth are very large; tail has white mark on lower tip **Walleye**
- 21. a. Dorsal fin is polka dotted **Sauger**
 b. Dorsal fin lacks polka dots **Yellow Perch**
- 22. a. Anal fin has four or more spines Go to #23
 b. Anal fin has three spines Go to #24
- 23. a. Body is silver with random black scales **Black Crappie**
 b. Body is not silver; black scales form lateral rows of spots **Rock Bass**
- 24. a. Mouth is very large; back of upper jaw extends to below or beyond eye. Go to #25
 b. Mouth is very small, back of upper jaw does not extend to eye Go to #26
- 25. a. Tip of upper jaw extends beyond eye **Largemouth Bass**
 b. Tip of upper jaw does not extend beyond eye **Smallmouth Bass**
- 26. a. Red spot is present at tip of gill flap **Pumpkinseed**
 b. Gill flap is all black **Bluegill**

Credits for Fish Drawings

Joseph Tomelleri

Illustrations by Joseph Tomelleri are copywrited and require permission of the artist for use outside the educational purposes of this publication.

- Iowa Darter
- Green Sunfish
- Yellow Bass
- Hybrid Striped Bass
- Round Goby
- Eurasian Ruffe
- White Bass
- White Perch

Public Domain

- Striped Bass

Virgil Beck for Wisconsin DNR

- All other fish

Which Fish is This?

1

The 20 fish cards in this packet support the opening and main activity in the “Which Fish is This?” lesson. They are designed to be printed with a fish image on the front and “Which Fish is This?” printed on the back. An answer key is on the next page.

Fish Images for Opening

Provide these images as paper copies or use them in PowerPoint to work as a class:

Grass Pickerel (*Esox americanus*)

Muskellunge (*Esox masquinongy*)

Northern Pike (*Esox lucius*)

Fish Images for Main Activity

You will need one set of these images for each group of students. Additional images as well as fish cards with the names printed on the back can be downloaded from the DNR's Web site, Match Your Catch or from Folder “m. Golden Rules” in this supplement. Use them to conduct the second part of this activity on using a dichotomous key. Note that in the group below, those marked with an * asterisk are *not* included in the key provided.

Centrarchidae (Sunfish)

Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*)

Pumpkinseed (*L. gibbosus*)

Green Sunfish (*L. cyanellus*)*

White Crappie (*Pomoxis annulari*)*

Black Crappie (*P. nigromaculatus*)

Rock Bass (*Ambloplites rupestris*)

Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*)

Gobiidae (Gobies)

Round Goby (*Neogobius melanostomus*)*

Percidae (Perch)

Iowa Darter (*Etheostoma exile*)

Walleye (*Stizostedion vitreum*)

Sauger (*S. canadense*)

Ruffe (*Gymnocephalus cernuus*)*

Yellow Perch (*Perca flavescens*)

Moronidae (Temperate Bass)

Yellow Bass (*Morone mississippiensis*)*

White Bass (*M. chrysops*)*

Striped Bass (*M. saxatilis*)*
(uncommon in Wisconsin)

Hybrid Striped Bass
(female white bass *M. chrysops*
x male striped bass *M. saxatilis*)*

White Perch (*M. Americana*)*

The underlined species are not native to Wisconsin.

Fish Images

Which Fish is This?

Answer Key



Black Crappie



Bluegill



Grass Pickerel



Green Sunfish



Iowa Darter



Largemouth Bass



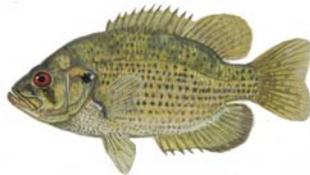
Muskellunge



Northern Pike



Pumpkinseed



Rock Bass



Round Goby



Eurasian Ruffe



Sauger



Striped Bass



Hybrid Striped Bass



Walleye



White Bass



White Crappie



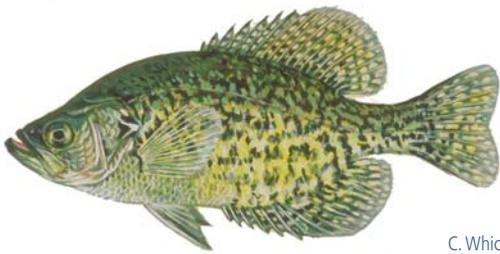
White Perch



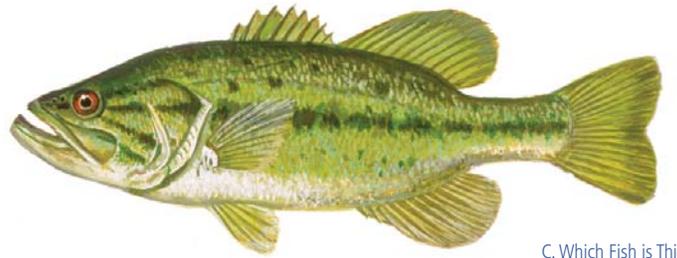
Yellow Bass



Yellow Perch



C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



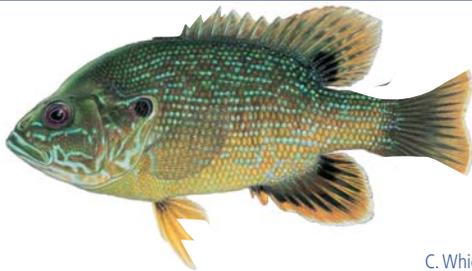
C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



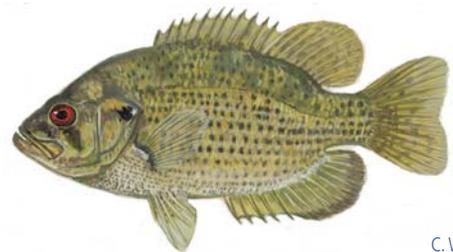
C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



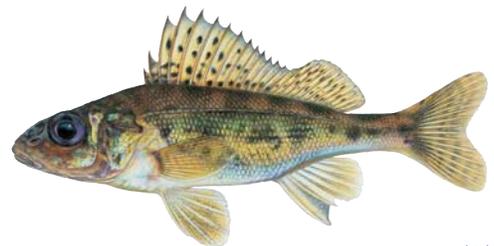
C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

**Which Fish
is This?**

**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?

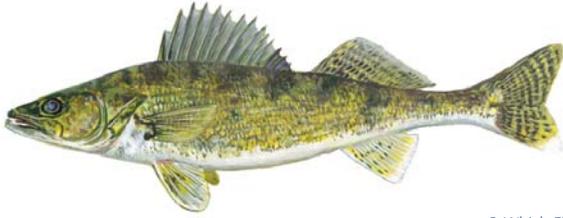
**Which Fish
is This?**



C. Which Fish is This?



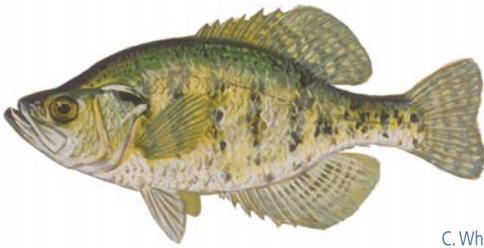
C. Which Fish is This?



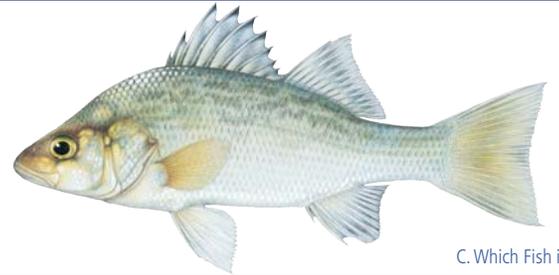
C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



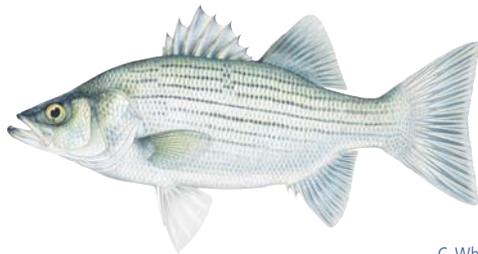
C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?



C. Which Fish is This?

C. Which Fish is This?

C. Which Fish is This?

C. Which Fish is This?