

Native and Exotic Fish of the Kissimmee River



Courtesy of Jennifer Swain

Largemouth Bass - *Micropterus salmoides*

(Native)

Identification: Dominant color is green to light green, ranging to almost black, horizontal patchy stripe from eye to tail

Size: 12" – 24"

Habitat/Diet: Found in ponds, lakes, slow rivers. Feed on small fish, frogs, invertebrates, and crustaceans.

Predator: Birds like raptors

Nesting: Males prepare the 1' – 4' nest in the water by using his fins to expose gravel and plant roots into a 2' – 3' wide circle. Females lay 2,000 – 40,000 eggs during the Spring (Jan. – May). Males guard the eggs for a week when they fry hatch.



Courtesy of FWC



Courtesy of SFWMD

Warmouth - *Lepomis gulosus*

(Native)

Identification: Dark green to brown, almost black with lighter vertical stripes, thick square shape body, the red eye and large mouth are markings to identify them.

Size: 6" – 10"

Habitat/Diet: Found in lakes, ponds, swamps, and quiet areas of streams with muddy bottoms. Feed on small fish, mollusks, and invertebrates.

Predator: Turtles, alligators, and larger fish.

Nesting: The nests for breeding are made of rock/gravel near a structure and the males guard it until hatch of the fry. May to July is when they breed.



Courtesy of Jennifer Swain



Black Crappie – *Pomoxis nigromaculatus*

(Native)

Identification: Green or dark gray on back, shading white or yellow on sides with spots/broken patches

Size: 8" – 16"

Habitat/Diet: Found in lakes and slow moving rivers. Feed on small fish, invertebrates, crayfish, and tadpoles.

Predator: Largemouth Bass, Channel Catfish, Turtles, Belted Kingfishers, and Great Blue Herons.

Nesting: Fanned by males over gravel or muddy bottoms in depths of 3-8 feet in water during the months of May and June.

Special thanks to Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, MASA, North American Native Fishes, S.F.W.M.D., U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USGS, Christian Fischer, Garold Sneegas, Jennifer Swain, for the use of text and some photos. Produced by the Florida Center for Environmental Studies at Riverwoods Field Lab. Contact 863/462-0025 or <http://ces.fau.edu/riverwoods>

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Courtesy of SFWMD



Courtesy of SFWMD

Bluegill - *Lepomis macrochirus*

(Native)

Identification: Color varies from dark blue green to lighter green, long dorsal fin and slightly forked tail with a black dot at the dorsal fin. **Size:** 4" – 12"

Habitat/Diet: Found in lakes, ponds, and streams. Feed on smaller fish and invertebrates.

Predator: Large fish, birds, and turtles.
Nesting: Males prepare the 1' – 6' nest in the water by using his tail to expose gravel. Females lay 50,000 eggs during the Spring (May – Jul). Males guard the eggs for a week when they fry hatch.



Courtesy of SFWMD

Redear (Shellcracker) –

Lepomis microlophus

(Native)

Identification: Bright red mark on the back edge of the gill cover, not as round but larger, olive in color with iridescent gold-green sheen that fades on the sides.

Size: 8" – 12"

Habitat/Diet: Found in ponds, lakes, river backwaters, and reservoirs. Feed on small fish, crustaceans, mollusks, and invertebrates.

Predators: Largemouth Bass and catfish

Nesting: Made of sand into a saucer shape between July – Sept. and the males guard it until hatch of the fry. Female lays 15,000 – 30,000 eggs.



Courtesy of FWC

Blue Tilapia - *Oreochromis aureus*

(Exotic)

Identification: Blue-gray shading, white belly, dorsal and caudal fins are red to pink borders, and spiny dorsal fin is joined to the soft dorsal fin.

Size: 5" - 8"

Habitat/Diet: Found in lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, canals, and some in saltwater. Feeds on invertebrates and phytoplankton.

Predator: None known

Nesting: Made of substrate materials and the males guard it until hatch of the fry. April to June is when they breed.

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Florida Gar - *Lepisosteus platyrhincus*

(Native)



Identification: Irregular round, black spots on head, body and fins, olive brown along back and sides with a white to yellow belly are distinct features of the Florida Gar. They have bony (Ganoid) scales forming armored-like body and an airbladder to breathe allowing them to survive in low oxygen water.

Size: 13" – 34"

Habitat/Diet: Found in lowland streams, canals, and lakes with mud or sand bottoms and an abundance of underwater vegetation. Feed on fish and crustaceans.

Predator: American Alligator

Nesting: Breeding occurs between Apr – Oct. Female disperses the eggs into a shallow area of water without a nest.

Channel Catfish - *Ictalurus punctatus*

(Native)



Identification: They have whisker-like sensory barbells and a deep forked tail with scattered black spots along the back and side. Their upper jaw projects beyond the lower jaw. Gray to gray-brown color with a green tint color along the sides. They feel slimy and have no scales.

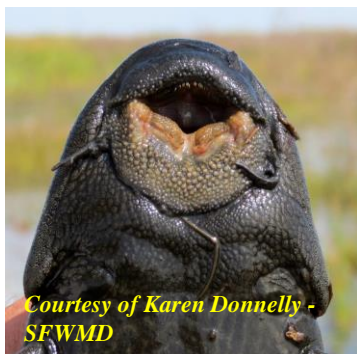
Size: 15" – 24"

Habitat/Diet: Found in lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. Feed on fish, vegetation, and crustaceans.

Predator: Flathead catfish

Nesting: Males prepare the nest in the water by using his tail/fins to expose sediments. Females lay thousands of eggs during the Spring (May – Jul). Males guard the eggs for a week when the fry hatch allowing no females in because of eating their own eggs.

Armored Catfish– *Loricariidae* (Exotic)



Identification: Have a sucker mouth for eating algae, dark Brown in color with many spots/lines, armor plated scales to protect themselves from predators, and whiskers.

Size: 3" – 8"

Habitat/Diet: Found in lakes, ponds, river, and streams. Feed on vegetation and phytoplankton.

Predator: American Alligator

Nesting: Eggs are laid in a bubble nest. Females lay about 250 eggs during the Spring. Males guard the eggs for a week or two when the fry hatch then abandon them.



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Gambusia (Mosquito Minnow) - *Gambusia affinis*

(Native)



Identification: small, dull gray in color with a large abdomen, black spots on the body and tail fin, with a mouth that turns upward.

Size: 1" – 3"

Habitat/Diet: Found in lower salinity lagoons and upland freshwater. Feed on mosquito larvae.

Predator: Any larger fish than they are, frogs, and birds

Nesting: Breeding begins around Summer season, female has anywhere from 10-100 babies (livebearer—no eggs). When in labor they tend to isolate themselves from everything.



Courtesy of MASA

Sailfin Molly- *Poecilia latipinna*

(Native)



Identification: High fins are how they got the name "Sailfin" Molly. The fin color ranges from red-orange with a blue tint. They are white to light gray in color on their bodies. The male has a high fin as pictured to the left, females have a very low dorsal fin.

Size: 2"-4"

Habitat/Diet: Found in shallow surfaces along the edges of marshes, lowland streams, ponds, swamps, and estuaries near structures for coverage. Feed on vegetation and invertebrates.

Predator: Largemouth Bass

Nesting: 3-4 week gestation, and have 10-100 young.

Least Killifish- *Heterandria formosa*

(Native)



Courtesy of Jennifer Swain

Identification: Females have dark black vertical stripes down the body whereas males have faint black vertical stripes and tend to be almost white in color.

Size: 0.5" – 1"

Habitat/Diet: Found in vegetated, slow moving or standing freshwater but also occurs in brackish waters. Feed on small invertebrates or algae.

Predator: All larger fish and birds

Nesting: Female can have around 2-40 babies (livebearer—no eggs). When in labor they tend to isolate themselves from everything.



Courtesy of North American Native Fishes

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Golden Topminnow - *Fundulus chrysotus*

(Native)



Identification: lacks a lateral line, is olive green to yellow with iridescent golden flecks, fins are yellow or white.

Size: 1.5" – 3.5"

Habitat/Diet: Found in lakes, rivers, and ponds. Feed on fish.

Predator: All larger fish and birds

Nesting: They lay their eggs in plant roots that floats around on the surface during late Spring to early Summer. The eggs will hatch within two weeks.

Tadpole (Native)



Identification: Frogs begin their lives as tadpoles that are hatched in the water from tiny jelly-covered eggs. Tadpoles are born with gills, just like a fish, so that they can breathe under water. They have a big head and a long tail.

Size: less than 1"

Habitat/Diet: Found most anywhere. Feed on themselves and algae/plants.

Predator: anything larger than them; the jelly has an awful taste, which protects the eggs from predators until they are ready to hatch.

Nesting: They build circular nests in sand and will turn into a frog and lose their tail; the frog breeding starts around rainy season to the dry season