

green sunfish

Lepomis cyanellus

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Actinopterygii
Order: Perciformes
Family: Centrarchidae

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

FEATURES

The green sunfish has a heavy body and a large mouth, with the upper jaw reaching to about the middle of the eye. The average length of this fish is about nine inches. The body is blue-green on the sides and back with a yellow or white belly. Blue spots and streaks are present on the side of the head. The flap on the gill cover is edged with white or yellow. The breeding male has white or pink pelvic fins, and his dorsal, anal and tail fins are edged with white or pink. The breeding female has a series of dark bars on the body.

BEHAVIORS

The green sunfish lives in streams, ditches, lakes, ponds and other water bodies. It is often found in habitats in which other sunfishes cannot live, such as those with varying levels of turbidity, dissolved oxygen, temperature and stream flow. Spawning occurs June through August. The male constructs a nest by fanning his fins over the bottom substrate. The nest is not placed in a colony, like those of some other sunfishes, unless suitable nest sites are limited. After the female deposits the eggs, and they are fertilized, the male remains with the nest until the young leave it in about six or seven days. The green sunfish eats insects, fishes and crayfish.

ILLINOIS RANGE



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Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams; swamps

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none