

warmouth

Lepomis gulosus

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

ILLINOIS STATUS

common, native

© William N. Roston



adult

FEATURES

The warmouth has a heavy body and a large mouth, with the upper jaw reaching the middle of the eye or beyond. The average length is about eight inches. Teeth are present on the tongue. Dark lines may be seen on the body behind the red eye. The presence of three anal spines helps to distinguish this species from the similar rock bass, which has six anal spines. The back and sides of a warmouth are green-brown with dark blotches, while the belly is light yellow. The fins have dark brown spots and bands. Breeding males have the flap on the gill cover edged with red, and the pelvic and anal fins outlined in white.

BEHAVIORS

The warmouth lives in swamps, sloughs, ditches and other areas with clear water, little or no current and plenty of plants. Spawning occurs May through August. The male fans a nest on the bottom into which the female deposits eggs. Eggs hatch in a little over a day. The male remains with the nest from the time of egg deposition through the time when the young leave it, several days later. The warmouth eats crayfish, insects, fishes and aquatic sowbugs.

ILLINOIS RANGE



© Illinois Department of Natural Resources. 2020. *Biodiversity of Illinois*.

Unless otherwise noted, photos and images © Illinois Department of Natural Resources.



Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams; swamps

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none