

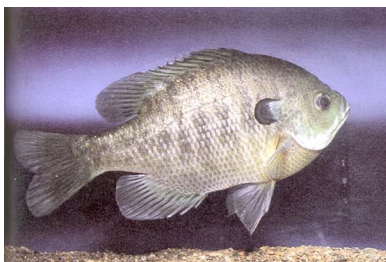
Many people consider the Minnesota River an ideal place to go fishing. Fish draw people from across the region and other states. For example Minnesota River catfish have drawn people from Iowa for decades. Game fish are fish that many people enjoy catching during angling. Though there are many different species of game fish, the ones listed in this field guide are the most commonly caught, kept, and eaten! To learn more about fishes of Minnesota, see Minnesota Dept of Natural Resources website: <http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/fish/index.html>



Konrad Schmidt

Largemouth Bass - *Micropterus salmoides*

Largemouth bass are heralded as an exciting fish to catch, they have a mouth that extends back beyond the back of the eye. They grow to about 16 inches and are usually dark green with horizontal stripe along the middle of the fish on either side made up of dark blotches. The underside is light green or white. The anterior portion of the dorsal fin contains 9 spines and the posterior portion contains 12 to 13 soft rays.



William Schmid

Bluegill - *Lepomis macrochirus*

The Bluegills are a popular sunfish species to catch and are found in most of the state's lakes and streams. They have a dark spot at the base of the dorsal fin, vertical bars on their sides, and a relatively small mouth compared to other sunfish. The spiny dorsal fin has about 10 spines, which is broadly connected to the soft dorsal. There are 3 spines on the anal fin. The back and upper sides are usually dark olive green, orange on the sides, and reddish-orange or yellow on the belly.



Konrad Schmidt

Green Sunfish - *Lepomis cyanellus*

Green Sunfish have a dark green, almost blue, body with green sides and yellow to white undersides. The upper jaw extends to the middle of the eye and the pectoral fins are short and rounded. Green Sunfish have blue lines on their cheek with rows of small blue speckles on their body. All but the pectoral fins have an orange, yellow, or white outline. They often have a black spot near the back of the dorsal and anal fins. The opercle is black and can have a thin white to yellow-orange margin.



Konrad Schmidt

Yellow Perch - *Perca flavescens*

The yellow perch is one of the most commonly caught fish in Minnesota (MDNR). It is a small fish with yellow on the sides with wide dark bands coming down the sides. They are about 6 inches in length and 1/3 pound. The dorsal fin is completely divided into a front spiny and back soft-rayed portion.



Konrad Schmidt

Northern Pike - *Esox lucius*

According to the MDNR, Northern Pike is a voracious predator and one of the easiest to catch, it lives in nearly all of MN stream and lakes. Northern pike are like muskellunge. They are tube-shaped with a flat, duckbill snout. The dorsal and anal fins are set close to the caudal fin. The back, head, and upper sides range in color from light to dark olive green with light, bean-shaped markings along the sides in horizontal rows. They have white bellies and orange-yellow, tiger-striped fins. All fins are rounded. Northern pike have 5 or fewer pores on the jaw, while Muskies have more than 6.



Konrad Schmidt

Muskellunge - *Esox masquinongy*

"The Muskellunge is one of the largest and most elusive fish that swims in the Minnesota" (MDNR). Muskies are light colored and usually have dark bars running up and down their long bodies. That's the opposite of northern pike, which have light markings on a dark body. Muskies are silver, light green, or light brown. The foolproof way to tell a muskie from a northern is to count the pores on the underside of the jaw: A muskie has 6 or more. A northern has 5 or fewer.



Konrad Schmidt

Walleye - *Sander vitreus*

The walleye is the most sought after fish in Minnesota and a prize among anglers, it averages 1-2 pounds, though it occasionally exceeds 10 pounds. It is a torpedo-shaped fish ranges from dark olive brown to yellowish gold. The sides are often marked with brassy flecks. The walleye is named for its pearlescent eye. Unlike the sauger, the walleye lacks spots on its dusky dorsal fin, except for a dark splotch at the rear base of the fin, a marking the sauger does not have. The lower tip of the walleye's tail is white, unlike the all-dark lower lobe of the sauger.



Konrad Schmidt

Channel Catfish - *Ictalurus punctatus*

The channel catfish commonly found in large rivers and "will eat just about anything that comes in front of its nose" (MDNR) The average catfish is 12-24 in and weighs 2-7 lbs, they have no scales only a single bony spine in each pectoral and dorsal fin. They have 8 barbels around the mouth. The tail is deeply forked and its upper jaw is longer than the lower jaw. The dorsal and pectoral spines are deeply serrated and sharp, while the anal fin is curved and has 24-30 rays. The body ranges in colors of blue, gray, silver, and black. Their belly is usually white/cream colored. The Minnesota record catfish is 38 lbs, caught in the Mississippi River.



Konrad Schmidt

Flathead Catfish - *Pylodictis olivaris*

Flathead catfish can reach about 3-4 feet long and can weight over 100 pounds. They have a flat head with a projecting lower jaw, like the name suggests. It is most commonly found in big rivers away from the main current. Like the channel catfish, it has smooth, scaleless skin, whisker-like barbells around the mouth, and long, sharp spines on the dorsal and pectoral fins. Flathead catfish are generally pale yellow to light brown on the back and sides with a pale yellow or cream colored underside. The tail fin is slightly notched, but not deeply forked like the channel catfish.



Konrad Schmidt

Yellow bullhead - *Ameiurus natalis*

A member of the same family as catfish, yellow bullheads are found in warm, murky lakes and streams in central and eastern Minnesota. They are small, light, yellowish-brown colored fish with pale barbels on their face, a yellow to greenish colored back and have a light-colored underside. They have a rounded tail fin and no scales. They grow to no more than 2 pounds and have 23-27 anal fin rays.



Konrad Schmidt

Black Crappie - *Pomoxis nigromaculatus*

The Black Crappie is a large sunfish that grows up to 16 inches. They have a rounded body that is greenish on the back and silvery sides with black markings. The belly is sliver. They prefer deeper, cooler, clearer waters than the white crappie.



Steven DeLain - MDNR
Steven Delain

White Crappie - *Pomoxis anularis*

White crappie are laterally compressed and very similar in appearance to the Black Crappie. White crappie have 5-10 vertical bars rather than randomly scattered spots like the black crappie. The dorsal fin of a white crappie starts further back on the body than that of a black crappie. White crappie are also slightly more elongate than black crappie.

Photos courtesy of Konrad Schmidt, Steven Delain, and William Schmid. "Ask an Expert about the Minnesota River" project profiles scientists and citizens answering questions about the health of the Minnesota River. More answers to questions about the Minnesota River can be found at: mrbdc.mnsu.edu/learn

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