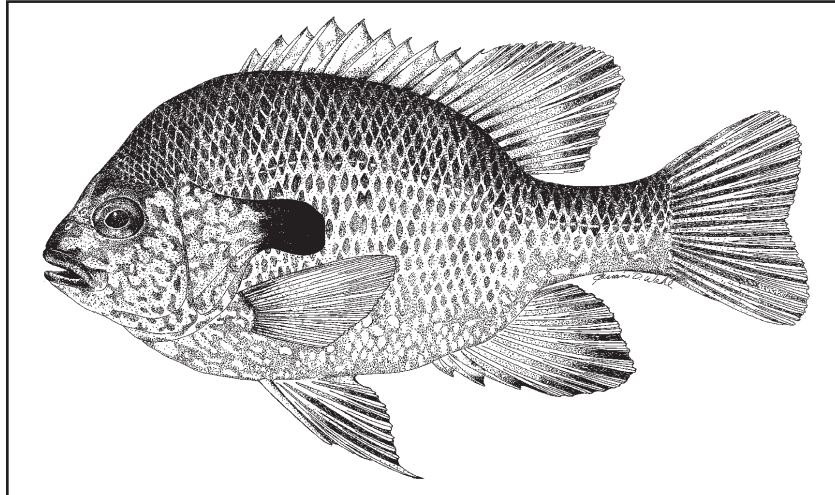


Life History Notes

Longear Sunfish

Scientific Name: *Lepomis megalotis*



Publication 173
(R999)

Identification:

Longear sunfish are deep, slab-sided fish with a small mouth. Their most distinctive characteristic is the long ear flap, or opercle, that is nearly all black except for a narrow white border. Coloration includes olive or light orange with emerald blue wavy lines running from the mouth to the ear flap. The back is olive-green with blue-green specks on the side, and the belly is orange or yellow. Breeding males are brilliantly colored with their normal coloration more intense during this period.

Range and Habitat:

Longear sunfish are native to Ohio and are found throughout the state. They favor sluggish, clear streams of moderate size. Preferred habitat is near beds of aquatic vegetation. They are frequently found in the same streams as spotted bass, and are very common in the Scioto River drainage.

Life History:

Longear sunfish are communal nest spawners. Males select a spawning site in shallow water between mid-May and mid-August where the females lay up to 22,119 eggs in a single nest. Males remain with the nest to guard the eggs until hatching. Their diet includes insects and small invertebrates. Longear grow slowly and can take up to three years to reach 4 inches in length. However, their slow growth is not the result of overcrowding as with many other sunfish species.

Adult Size:

Typical size is less than 6 inches. The largest reported longear in Ohio was 9.3 inches.

Fishing Methods:

Longear can be caught on light tackle with natural baits or very small spinner baits. Most anglers, however, are not interested in catching longear because of their small size.