



Fish Species in the Red River

Fish facts about the some of the more than 50 species of fish living in the Red River.

Pike family - Esocidae

Northern Pike

- Length:** 2'x4' (8"-12" during first year of growth)

•**What to Look For:** Long slender body marked with horizontal spots, never more than five pores on each side of the lower jaw; scales covering entire cheek; ducklike head with long pointed jaws & pointed teeth.

•**Habitat & Food:** Common throughout Red River watershed. Diet: Variety of fish species.



Muskellunge

•**What to Look For:** Vertical dark bars on sides & 6-8 pores on each side of lower jaw; have scales only on upper half of the cheek.

•**Habitat & Food:** Spawn when water temperature reaches 48-59 degrees. Diet: Variety of fish species.

Perch Family - Percidae

Walleye

•**Length:** Individuals as large as 12-13 lbs.

•**What to Look For:** Slender body; dark olive color with over-all golden brown mottling & white belly; has black blotch on lower rear portion of the front dorsal fin; many sharp spines at front of dorsal fin.

•**Habitat & Food:** Common throughout the Red River and larger tributaries. Spawn: late April/mid May. Diet: Fish, worms, insects, and crayfish.

Sauger

•**Length:** Up to 16" in the Red River.

•**What to Look For:** Resemble walleye, but not as large. Blotchy body color & rows of dark spots on dorsal fin.

•**Habitat & Food:** Abundant in lower reaches of the Red River downstream of Grand Forks. Spawn: Mid/late May. Diet: Minnows, insects and crayfish.

Sunfish family - Centrarchidae

Smallmouth Bass

•**Length:** 1 1/2"-24"

•**What to Look For:**

Dark green color with barred markings on its sides, and red colored eyes; sharp spines at front of dorsal and anal fins; body usually deep; flat sided.

•**Habitat & Food:** Abundant in upstream areas from Wahpeton to Grand Forks. Spawn: Late May to late June. Diet: Insects, fish, frogs, and crayfish.



Drum family - Sciaenidae

Freshwater Drum (sheepshead, grunter)

•**Length:** 6-48"

•**What to Look For:** Silver-gray and deep-bodied; top fin very long & nearly separated into two parts; tail rounded; has special set of muscles that vibrate against swim bladder to product the loud drumming or croaking sound for which they are named.

•**Habitat & Food:** Common in main stem of Red River and lower reaches of larger tributaies. Spawn: Early to late June.

During spawning, croaking or drumming can be heard. Diet: Bottom feeders selecting insects, small fish, crayfish, & small clams.

Catfish family - Ictaluridae

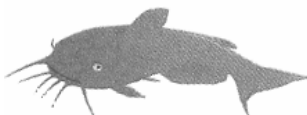
Channel Catfish

•**Length:** Slow growing up to 30 inches.

•**What to Look**

For: 4 pairs of barbels around mouth; scalesless body; fleshy fin on rear of back; sharp hard spine at front of dorsal & pectoral fin.

•**Habitat & Food:** Most common game fish within the Red River & its tributary streams. Diet: Minnows, snails, clams, frogs, crayfish & vegetation.



Black & Brown Bullhead

•**Length:** 2"-40"

•**What to Look For:** Stockier & darker colored than catfish; smaller than catfish.

•**Habitat & Food:** Common within the watershed. Spawn: May and June. Build a nest to spawn in. Diet: Are omnivores, eating any food item, including worms, minnows, snails, clams, frogs, crayfish & vegetation.

Sturgeon family - Acipenseridae

Lake Sturgeon

•**What to Look For:** Primitive fish with cartilaginous skeleton; shovel-like snout; four barbels under snout in front of a toothless mouth; long shark-like tail and bony scales on the body.

•**Habitat & Food:** Were common in the Red River & several tributary streams in early 1900's. Only a few remain in the Red River today, & therefore, there is no open angling season for lake sturgeon on the Red River.

Mooneye family - Hiodontidae

Mooneye & Goldeye

•**Length:** 12"-18"

•**What to Look For:** Flat-sided with firmly embedded silvery scales, a large golden eye & one dorsal fin.

•**Habitat & Food:** Common in the Red River & lower reaches of larger tributaries. Mooneye is abundant in the upstream reaches of the river, with goldeye found in downstream reaches. Spawn: June. Diet: Variety of insects, small fish, crayfish & small clams. Important forage item for the large predator fish. Used as bait or eaten as a smoked fish.

Minnow family -

Cyprinidae

Carp

•**Length:** 1 1/2"-36"

•**What to Look For:** Teeth in throat only; usually no spine in fins; smooth scales.

•**Habitat & Food:** Common in Red River and downstream of major fish barriers on its' tributaries. Spawn: Early May-Late June.



For More Information Contact:

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May 2005