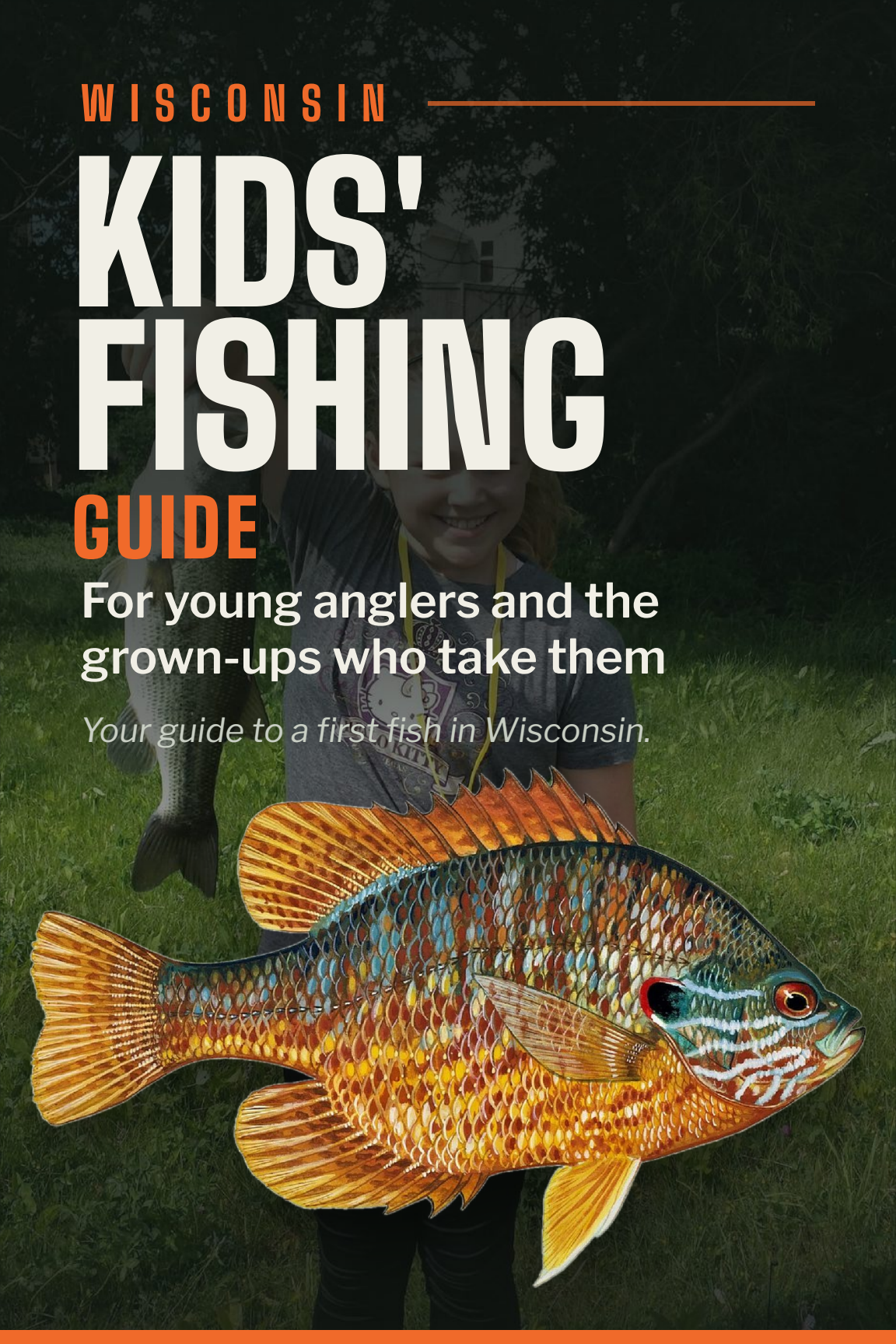
WISCONSIN

KIDS' FISHING GUIDE

For young anglers and the grown-ups who take them

Your guide to a first fish in Wisconsin.



WISCONSIN

KIDS' FISHING

Guide

For young anglers and the grown-ups who take them



Kids' Fishing Guide
First edition, October 2026

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Read this first. Fishing rules change every year and differ by lake. Everything about seasons, sizes and bag limits in this book is for the 2026–27 season, checked 2026-10-08. Always check the current Wisconsin DNR rules and your lake's own rules before you fish. Depth maps are not for navigation. Ice is never guaranteed safe. You are responsible for your own safety and for following the law.

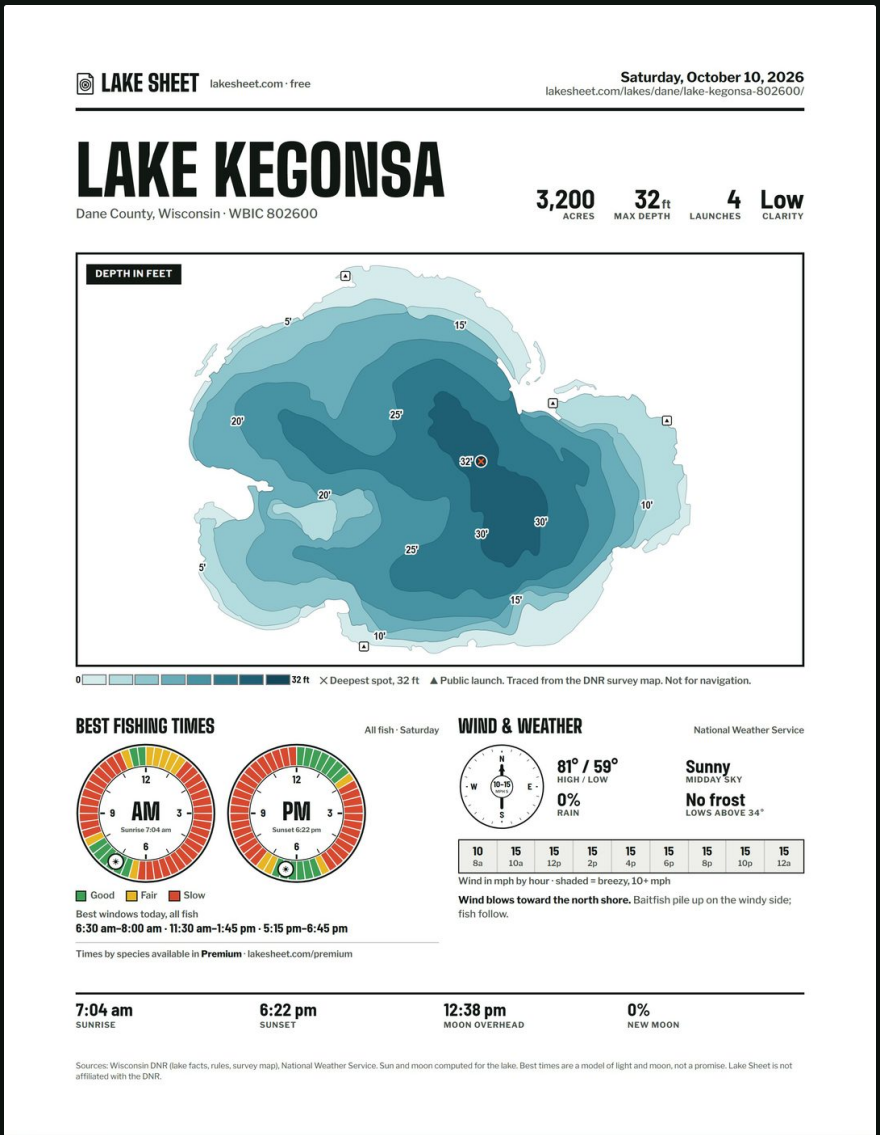
Lake Sheet is not affiliated with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Lake facts come from DNR survey and stocking records as published by Lake Sheet; see the sources at the back of the book.

lakesheet.com

FREE WITH THIS BOOK

YOUR FREE LAKE SHEET

Free for more than 4,600 Wisconsin lakes: two printable pages, made for the boat. This is the real sheet for Lake Kegonsa.



LAKE SHEET lakesheet.com · free

Saturday, October 10, 2026
lakesheet.com/lakes/dane/lake-kegonsa-802600/

LAKE KEGONSA

Dane County, Wisconsin · WBIC 802600

3,200	32 ft	4	Low
ACRES	MAX DEPTH	LAUNCHES	CLARITY

DEPTH IN FEET

5' 15' 20' 25' 32' 20' 10' 30' 30' 25' 5' 15' 10'

0 32 ft · ✕ Deepest spot, 32 ft · ▲ Public launch. Traced from the DNR survey map. Not for navigation.

BEST FISHING TIMES

All fish · Saturday

AM — Sunrise 7:04 am

PM — Sunset 6:22 pm

Good · Fair · Slow

Best windows today, all fish
6:30 am–8:00 am · 11:30 am–1:45 pm · 5:15 pm–6:45 pm

Times by species available in **Premium** · lakesheet.com/premium

WIND & WEATHER

National Weather Service

81° / 59°
HIGH / LOW

0%
RAIN

Sunny
MIDDAY SKY

No frost
LOWS ABOVE 34°

10	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
8a	10a	12p	2p	4p	6p	8p	10p	12a

Wind in mph by hour · shaded = breezy, 10+ mph

Wind blows toward the north shore. Baitfish pile up on the windy side; fish follow.

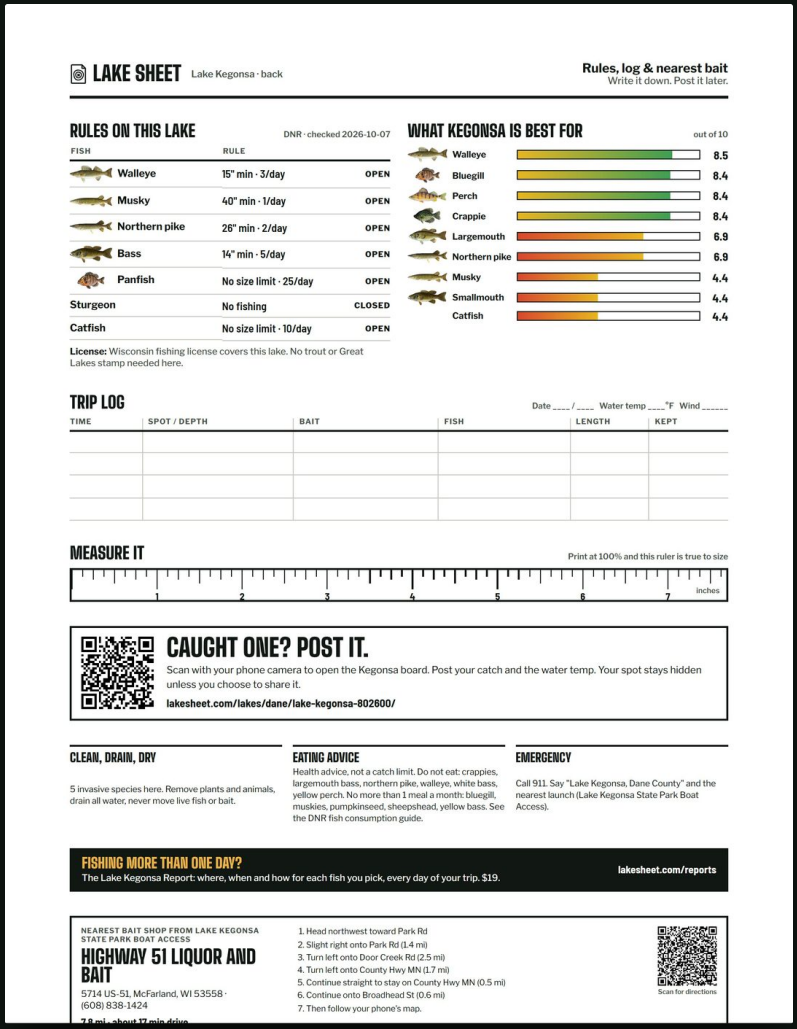
7:04 am	6:22 pm	12:38 pm	0%
SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON OVERHEAD	NEW MOON

Sources: Wisconsin DNR (lake facts, rules, survey map), National Weather Service. Sun and moon computed for the lake. Best times are a model of light and moon, not a promise. Lake Sheet is not affiliated with the DNR.

1. **Depth map** traced from the DNR survey, deepest spot marked (traced lakes)
2. **Lake facts:** acres, max depth, launches, clarity
3. **Best times** from the sun and moon on AM and PM dials
4. **Wind and weather** by the hour, and which shore the wind hits
5. **Sun and moon** times for the lake
6. **Sources and date** on every fact

THE BACK OF THE SHEET

RULES, LOG & NEAREST BAIT



LAKE SHEET Lake Kegonsa · back

Rules, log & nearest bait
Write it down. Post it later.

RULES ON THIS LAKE

DNR · checked 2026-10-07

FISH	RULE	
Walleye	15" min · 3/day	OPEN
Musky	40" min · 1/day	OPEN
Northern pike	26" min · 2/day	OPEN
Bass	14" min · 5/day	OPEN
Panfish	No size limit · 25/day	OPEN
Sturgeon	No fishing	CLOSED
Catfish	No size limit · 10/day	OPEN

License: Wisconsin fishing license covers this lake. No trout or Great Lakes stamp needed here.

WHAT KEGONSA IS BEST FOR

out of 10

Walleye	8.5
Bluegill	8.4
Perch	8.4
Crappie	8.4
Largemouth	6.9
Northern pike	6.9
Musky	4.4
Smallmouth	4.4
Catfish	4.4

TRIP LOG

Date ____ / ____ Water temp ____°F Wind _____

TIME	SPOT / DEPTH	BAIT	FISH	LENGTH	KEPT

MEASURE IT

Print at 100% and this ruler is true to size

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 inches

CAUGHT ONE? POST IT.

Scan with your phone camera to open the Kegonsa board. Post your catch and the water temp. Your spot stays hidden unless you choose to share it.

lakesheet.com/lakes/dane/lake-kegonsa-802600/

CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY

5 invasive species here. Remove plants and animals, drain all water, never move live fish or bait.

EATING ADVICE

Health advice, not a catch limit. Do not eat: crappies, largemouth bass, northern pike, walleye, white bass, yellow perch. No more than 1 meal a month: bluegill, muskies, pumpkinseed, sheepshead, yellow bass. See the DNR fish consumption guide.

EMERGENCY

Call 911. Say "Lake Kegonsa, Dane County" and the nearest launch (Lake Kegonsa State Park Boat Access).

FISHING MORE THAN ONE DAY?
The Lake Kegonsa Report: where, when and how for each fish you pick, every day of your trip. $19.
lakesheet.com/reports

NEAREST BAIT SHOP FROM LAKE KEGONSA STATE PARK BOAT ACCESS

HIGHWAY 51 LIQUOR AND BAIT

5714 US-51, McFarland, WI 53558 · (608) 838-1424

7.8 mi · about 17 min drive

1. Head northwest toward Park Rd
2. Slight right onto Park Rd (1.4 mi)
3. Turn left onto Door Creek Rd (2.5 mi)
4. Turn left onto County Hwy MN (1.7 mi)
5. Continue straight to stay on County Hwy MN (0.5 mi)
6. Continue onto Broadhead St (0.6 mi)
7. Then follow your phone's map.

Scan for directions

1. **This lake's rules** for every fish, from the DNR
2. **What the lake is best for,** rated by fish
3. **Trip log** and a true-size **ruler**
4. **Invasive species** and eating advice
5. **Nearest bait shop** we know of, with turn-by-turn directions
6. Scan to post your catch

lakesheet.com

Find your lake, print it, take it in the boat

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book is for you and a grown-up to read together. The big pages are for kids. The boxes that say **For grown-ups** are for the adult who takes you fishing. Read a chapter, then go try it.

YOUR FIRST TRIP, IN 4 STEPS

1. Learn the fish in Chapter 1.
2. Read Chapter 4 on bobber fishing, the easiest way to catch a fish.
3. Pick a dock or pier from Chapter 7.
4. Go in the morning or evening (Chapter 7).

FOR GROWN-UPS

1. Read Chapter 3, safety, first.
2. Rig the rod before you leave home (Chapter 4).
3. Kids under 16 don't need a license. You do, if you fish or help cast and reel (Chapter 6).
4. Bring snacks. Plan to stay an hour, not a day. Chapter 10 is all for you.

The QR codes. Every lake in Chapter 7 has a square code. Ask your grown-up to point a phone camera at it. It opens that lake's free Lake Sheet: a depth map (on many lakes), the best times to fish today, the wind, where the boat launches are, the nearest bait shop and the lake's rules.

The rules. Fishing rules change every April 1, and some lakes have their own. The rules in this book are for the 2026–27 season. A grown-up should check the current rules before you keep a fish. The rules box on your lake's Lake Sheet is the quickest way.

The fun pages. Chapter 9 has a packing checklist, a fish checklist, a "My first fish" page, a measuring page, lake bingo and a word search. Chapter 11 is your fishing log. Fill them in on the big day.



CHAPTER 1

MEET THE FISH

Wisconsin lakes are full of fish you can catch. Here are the eight you are most likely to meet, plus their big cousin, the musky. Learn to tell them apart, and you will always know what is on the end of your line.

1.1 Parts of a fish · **1.2** Bluegill · **1.3** Pumpkinseed · **1.4** Yellow perch · **1.5** Crappie · **1.6** Largemouth bass · **1.7** Smallmouth bass · **1.8** Walleye · **1.9** Northern pike

1.1

PARTS OF A FISH

Every fish in this chapter has the same main parts. When you learn them, the ID tips are easy to follow.

PART	WHERE IT IS	WHAT IT DOES
Mouth	The front	Grabs food. Some fish have tiny mouths, some have huge ones.
Eyes	Each side of the head	Fish see well, and many see colors.
Gills	Under the gill cover, behind the head	Take oxygen out of the water so the fish can breathe.
Gill cover	The hard flap behind the eye	Protects the gills. On sunfish it ends in a dark "ear flap."
Dorsal fin	On the back	Keeps the fish steady. Many have sharp spines in front.
Pectoral fins	Behind the gills, one on each side	Steer, stop and back up, like hands.
Pelvic fins	Under the belly	Help the fish stay level.
Anal fin	Underneath, near the tail	Keeps the fish from rolling over.
Tail fin	The back end	Pushes the fish forward.
Lateral line	A thin line along each side	Feels movement and sound in the water.
Scales	All over the body	Armor. A slimy coat on top protects the fish from sickness.

How do fish breathe? A fish gulps water through its mouth. The water flows over the gills and out under the gill covers. The gills are full of tiny blood vessels that pull oxygen out of the water. That's why a fish can't breathe for long in the air, and why you should keep it in the water as much as you can.

> **THE SLIME IS IMPORTANT**
> That slippery coat on a fish keeps it healthy. Wet your hands before you touch a fish, so you don't rub the slime off.

1.2
BLUEGILL

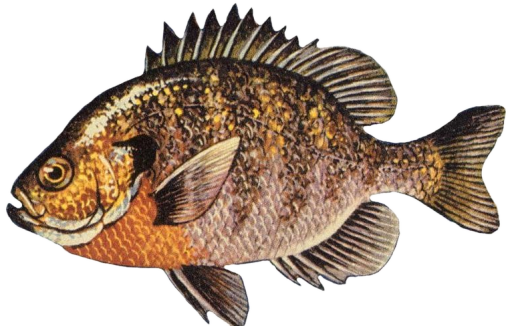


FIG 1.1 Bluegill. Look for the solid black ear flap and the dark smudge at the back of the top fin.

The bluegill is the fish most Wisconsin kids catch first. It lives near docks and weeds, it bites almost every day in summer, and it pulls hard for its size.

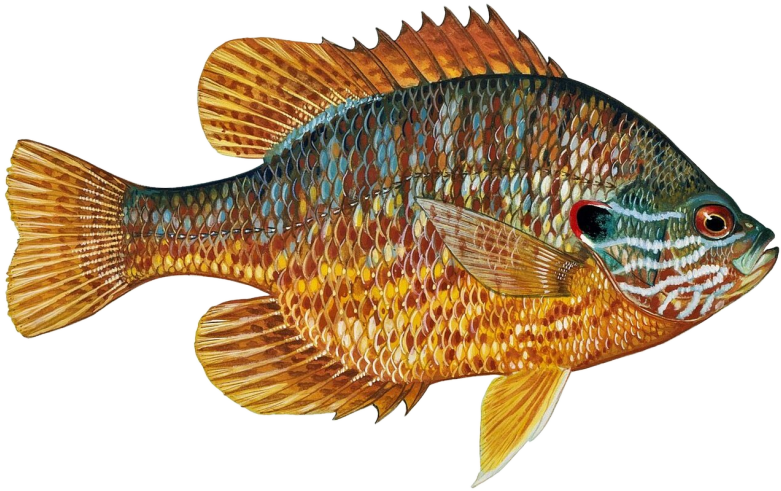
Tell it by	A round, flat body. A **solid black ear flap** with no red on it. A dark smudge at the back of the soft part of the top fin. Often dark stripes down the sides.
Where it lives	Near weeds, docks and lily pads, in shallow water.
Size	Most are 5 to 7 inches, about as long as a crayon box. The best lakes grow 9-inch bluegill.
Watch out	Sharp spines in the top fin. Hold it from the head back so they fold down (Chapter 5).
Wisconsin record	2 lb 9.8 oz, Green Bay, 1995

Fun fact. Bluegill dads build the nests. Each one sweeps a round dip in the sand with his tail, about as big as a dinner plate, and guards the eggs.

1.3
PUMPKINSEED

PUMPKINSEED

Lepomis gibbosus



TELL IT BY	A bright red or orange spot at the tip of the black ear flap, and wavy blue lines on the cheek.
LOOKS LIKE	Bluegill: same round shape, but its ear flap is all black, with no red spot.
SIZE	About as long as your hand. A big one is 8 inches.
WISCONSIN RECORD	1 lb 3.4 oz, caught May 31, 2020, on Silver Lake, Washington County

The pumpkinseed is the bluegill's colorful cousin, and the fish on the cover of this book. It lives in the same places and bites the same baits. Many kids say it is the prettiest fish in the lake: orange belly, blue lines on its cheeks, and a little red spot like a dot of paint.

Fun fact. A pumpkinseed's body is shaped a bit like the seed it's named after: flat and round.

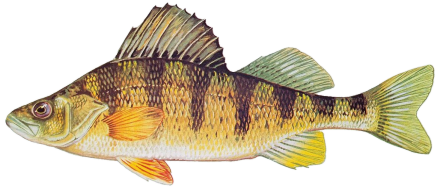


FIG 1.2 **Yellow perch.** Yellow sides with dark stripes, like a little tiger.

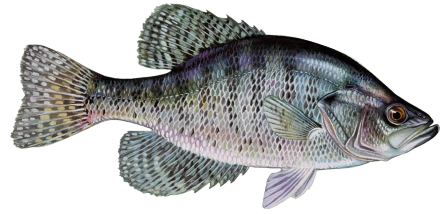


FIG 1.3 **Black crappie.** Silvery, speckled all over, with a big mouth.

1.4 YELLOW PERCH

Tell it by	**Yellow sides with 6 to 8 dark stripes** that go up and down. Two top fins that are separate. Orange lower fins.
Where it lives	In schools, near weeds and along sandy or muddy bottoms. Where you catch one, you'll often catch more.
Size	Most adults are 7 to 10 inches.
Watch out	The front top fin has 12 to 14 sharp spines.
Wisconsin record	3 lb 4 oz, Lake Winnebago, 1954

Fun fact. Perch swim in groups called schools. If the first fish bites, put your bait right back in the same spot.

1.5 CRAPPIE

Tell it by	A thin, silvery body **covered in dark speckles**, and a big mouth that turns up. Wisconsin has two kinds: black crappie (speckles everywhere) and white crappie (speckles in rows, like stripes).
Where it lives	Around fallen trees, brush, docks and weeds. Crappie often hang in the middle of the water, not on the bottom.
Size	8 to 10 inches is typical.
Watch out	Its mouth is thin like paper. Reel gently, and lift it in carefully, or the hook pulls out.

Wisconsin record	Black crappie: 4 lb 8 oz, Gile Flowage, 1967

How to say it. Most Wisconsin anglers say "CROP-ee."

Fun fact. Crappie bite best in the evening, when the light gets low.

1.6 LARGEMOUTH BASS

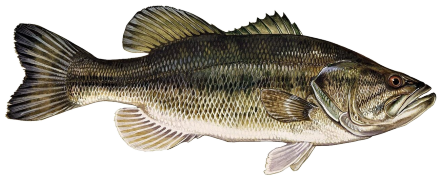


FIG 1.4 **Largemouth bass.** A dark stripe down the side, and a mouth that reaches past the eye.



FIG 1.5 **Smallmouth bass.** Brown or bronze, with dark bars up and down.

Tell it by	Green with a **dark stripe along the side**. Close its mouth and look: the **jaw reaches past the back of the eye**.
Where it lives	Weeds, lily pads, docks and fallen trees in warm, shallow water.
Size to keep	14 inches or longer, in season (Chapter 6).
Watch out	No sharp teeth, but bass can have hooks deep in their big mouths. Let a grown-up help unhook it.
Wisconsin record	11 lb 3 oz, Lake Ripley, Jefferson County, 1940

Fun fact. A bass doesn't bite its food into pieces. It opens its big mouth fast, sucks the food in with a gulp of water, and swallows it whole.

1.7 SMALLMOUTH BASS

Tell it by	**Brown or bronze**, often with dark bars going up and down. The **jaw stops under the eye**, not past it.

Where it lives	Rocks and gravel in clear lakes and rivers.
Size to keep	14 inches or longer, in season (Chapter 6).
Watch out	Smallmouth jump! Keep your rod tip up and keep reeling.
Wisconsin record	9 lb 1 oz, Indian Lake, Oneida County, 1950

LARGEMOUTH OR SMALLMOUTH? THE JAW TEST

Hold the bass with its mouth closed. Look where the back of the mouth ends.

- **Past the back of the eye:** largemouth.
- **Under the eye:** smallmouth.

1.8

WALLEYE



FIG 1.6 **Walleye.** Big glassy eyes, and a white tip on the bottom of the tail.



FIG 1.7 **Northern pike.** Long body, duckbill snout, and light spots on a dark body.

Tell it by	**Big, glassy eyes.** A **white tip on the bottom of the tail**. Gold and olive sides.
Where it lives	Near the bottom, often deeper than you can see. Walleye come shallow at sunset and after dark.
Size to keep	15 inches on most lakes, in season (Chapter 6).
Watch out	Sharp teeth and sharp spines on its back. Let a grown-up hold it.
Wisconsin record	18 lb 0 oz, High Lake, Vilas County, 1933

Fun fact. A walleye's eyes glow in a flashlight beam, like a cat's. They help it see and hunt in the dark.

1.9
NORTHERN PIKE

Tell it by	A **long body** like a torpedo and a **flat snout like a duck's bill**. Rows of **light, bean-shaped spots on a dark green body**.
Where it lives	In weeds, waiting to dart out and grab a fish.
Watch out	**Lots of very sharp teeth.** Never put your fingers near a pike's mouth. A grown-up unhooks it with long pliers.
Wisconsin record	38 lb 0 oz, Lake Puckaway, Green Lake County, 1952

Its big cousin, the musky. The muskellunge looks a lot like a pike, but it has **dark marks on a light body**. Pike are the opposite: light spots on a dark body. Muskies are rare to catch, and in most lakes one must be 40 inches long to keep it. Wisconsin's record musky weighed 69 lb 11 oz (Chippewa Flowage, 1949). The state records for the other fish are in Chapter 9.4.

FOR GROWN-UPS

Kids learn fish names fast when they hold the fish next to the picture. Bring this book, or take a phone photo of the fish and match it at home. The checklist in Chapter 9 turns it into a game. And every Lake Sheet lists which of these fish the DNR found in that lake, and how common they are.



CHAPTER 2

GEAR AND BAIT

You don't need much to catch a fish. A short rod, a reel with line on it, a few hooks, a bobber and some worms will do. This chapter shows you what each thing does, what size is right for you, what a whole kit costs, and which bait fish like best.

2.1 The rod · **2.2** The reel · **2.3** Line · **2.4** Hooks, sinkers and bobbers · **2.5** Your tackle box · **2.6** Your starter kit and what it costs · **2.7** Borrow gear for free · **2.8** Which bait catches the most fish? · **2.9** Worms · **2.10** Minnows · **2.11** Waxworms, leeches, crickets and jigs · **2.12** Where to get bait · **2.13** Keeping bait alive, and what to do with leftovers

2.1
THE ROD

The rod is the long, bendy pole. It throws your bait out, it bends when a fish pulls, and it helps you fight the fish without breaking the line.

YOUR AGE	ROD LENGTH	WHY
4 to 6	3 to 4 feet	Short is easy to hold and swing. A grown-up does most of the casting.
7 to 9	4 to 5 feet	Long enough to cast past the dock posts, short enough to control.
10 to 12	5 to 6 feet	A 10-year-old can handle a real light rod. Choose "ultralight" or "light."
13 and up	5½ to 6½ feet	A light adult spinning rod.

What size rod for a 10-year-old? About 5 to 5½ feet, marked **light** or **ultra-light**. A light rod bends a lot, so even a 6-inch bluegill feels like a big fish. That's half the fun.

Rod words to know. The **handle** is where you hold it. The **guides** are the little rings the line runs through. The **tip** is the thin end. Never step on the tip, and never close it in a car door. It snaps easily.

> **CARTOON RODS**
> Toy rods with cartoon characters on them work, but many have stiff rods and cheap reels that jam. A plain light rod from the same store often costs the same and works much better.

2.2
THE REEL

The reel holds the line. You turn the handle to bring the line back in. There are two kinds that kids use.