

BLUEGILL IS THE MOST COMMON SUNFISH IN LAKE GEORGE

BLUEGILL

Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*) has been introduced widely to bodies of water throughout North America. It is commonly stocked in bodies of water as forage for larger fish, such as bass, is a very popular freshwater game fish. Bluegills are widely used in toxicity tests and physiological studies. Within Lake George bluegills is the most common sunfish and can be found near shore in vegetated areas.

A greenish to olive colored fish, the bluegill has a deep compressed body with a slightly forked caudal fin that has rounded lobes and a rounded anal fin. There are traces of vertical dark bars on its sides. Their breasts are yellowish except during the spawning season when the male's breast turns red. The most distinguishing characteristic is a blue/black spot on the operculum or gill cover. Bluegill average between 4-6 inches in length, however the New York State



Bluegill are the most common sunfish and are a very popular freshwater game fish. It is typically found in vegetated areas near shore.

record is 2 pounds 8 ounces. Outside of New York the record was 4 pounds 12 ounces, and 12 inches long. Bluegills become sexually mature between 1-2 years old and can live for up to 11 years.

Spawning occurs in May to July when the air temperature stays above 70 degrees F. The males build nests that are constructed in colonies where they can be so close together that they form interesting shapes in the littoral zone of the lake. Nests are

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Bluegill

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generally 8-12 inches in diameter and found in 1-3 feet of water. During spawning the males become a dark blue with red breasts. The males will circle the nests making a series of noises to attract females. Smaller males that are unable to defend their own territories will stay the color of females and join other pairs as they spawn on the nests. Females can spawn up to 3 times during the summer releasing on average 50,000 eggs per spawn. After spawning the males will stay with the eggs defending them as well as aerating them. Incubation will take approximately six days.

Bluegill young feed on copepods and rotifers. Adults feed on insects, a variety of organisms and to a larger extent plant material. Adults feed during the day mostly in the morning and afternoon, choosing to feed throughout the water column.

Within Lake George, bluegill can be fished all year long; any size can be kept, with a daily limit of 50 fish. They are relatively easy to catch and can be found on their nests during spring. They move out into deeper water over 10 feet deep in the late summer and



Bluegill can be fished all year. The daily limit is 50 fish with no size requirements.

fall. In the winter they can be found in water 12-20 feet deep.

For additional information on fishing regulations in New York State please visit the website of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (www.dec.ny.gov).

January 2011

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