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REPORT NO. 681

SUGGESTED MATERIAL FOR FISH SECTION

OF I-H CLUB BULLETIN

by

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In the lakes and streams of Michigan there are to be found 180 different kinds of fish. The Michigan Department of Conservation classifies the fishes into 4 groups: game, forage, coarse, and obnoxious fishes. Of the 180 kinds of fish, only 16 are listed as game fishes. These are: lake, brown, brook, and rainbow trout, landlocked salmon, grayling, largemouth and smallmouth black bass, bluegill, pumpkinseed or common sunfish, black and white crappie or calico and strawberry bass, yellow perch, walleyed pike, northern pike, and muskellunge.

The forage fishes include the minnows, and the minnow-like fishes, such as the darters and sticklebacks. The coarse fishes include the suckers and bullheads. The carp, garpike, and dogfish are listed as obnoxious fishes, although recent studies indicate that the garpike and dogfish may be of value in preventing overpopulation and stunting of game fish in some waters.

The bluegill, perch and bluntnosed minnows are examples of fishes that are generally distributed over the entire state, while other fish are less widely distributed, and some are found in very restricted areas.

A wide variety of breeding habits is found among the fishes. Some fish,

such as the bass and bluegill, build nests on the sand and gravel shoal areas in which the eggs are laid. Other fish, as for example the perch, lay their eggs in gelatinous strings among the weeds, while still others, as the lake trout and walleyed pike, scatter their eggs over suitable shoal areas. Some of the minnows attach their eggs to the underside of logs, stones, and boards in the water. The number of eggs laid by the females varies from a hundred to several thousand, depending on the species of fish. In some species of fish the males guard the eggs and young, while in others the female protects them.

The food and feeding habits also varies with the kind of fish. The minnows, for the most part, feed upon the microscopic and semimicroscopic plants and animals found in all our waters. The larger fishes feed upon the minnows and other small fish, and upon the other animals, such as insects, clams, and snails found in our lakes and streams.

Bluegill

(Insert figure of bluegill)

The bluegill is probably the most sought after fish in Michigan. It furnishes a tremendous amount of recreation to the general fishing public. It is a game fighter and a very palatable pan fish. It is readily caught on worms, grasshoppers, crickets, and many other baits. It can be easily recognized by the jet black, flexible opercular flap, and the dark spot on the dorsal fin. There is no red or orange on the sides. It spawns in late spring and early summer, many bluegills building their nests in a small area. Average number of young produced per nest is about 17,000.

Pumpkinseed

(Insert figure of pumpkinseed)

The pumpkinseed is another popular and abundant pan fish. It differs from the bluegill in being more brightly colored, and in having a red spot on the opercular flap. Its habits are similar to those of the bluegill, though it spawns earlier.

Largemouth Black Bass

(Insert figure of largemouth black bass)

The largemouth is an extremely popular game fish and is widely distributed in the state. It is generally found in the weedier lakes and streams. It can be distinguished from the smallmouth by the larger scales, the more deeply notched dorsal fin, and the usual presence of a dark stripe on the side. Also its mouth is larger. It spawns in the early summer, hollowing a bed out in gravel or other suitable material. The male fish guards the nest and the fry.

Smallmouth Black Bass

(Insert figure of smallmouth black bass)

The smallmouth is considered by many anglers to be the gamist of all game fish. It differs from the largemouth in having no stripe on the side, smaller scales, a less deeply notched dorsal fin, and a smaller mouth. Its habits are similar except that it seems to prefer logs and gravel to vegetation. It spawns somewhat later in the season than does the largemouth.

Blunt-nosed Minnow

(Insert figure of blunt-nosed minnow)

The little blunt-nosed minnow is probably the most widely distributed minnow in Michigan. It occurs in virtually all waters of the state, and is usually very abundant wherever found. It can be readily recognized by the small inferior mouth, and the stubby first ray of the dorsal fin. The scales in the region of the nape of the neck are small and crowded. The blunt-nose spawns in the spring, building a nest under a small slab, or a small piece of bark. The eggs are guarded by the male till the fry hatch. The blunt-nose is a very valuable forage minnow, being quite hardy and abundant.

Golden Shiner

(Insert figure of golden shiner)

The golden shiner is found in most of the quieter streams and the weedy lakes over the state as a whole. It is a popular bait minnow and is often used in fishing for northern pike. It reaches rather large size for a minnow, often being 8 inches long. It can be easily recognized by the gold-green color, the small pointed head with the sharply upturned mouth, and the strongly decurved lateral line. It spawns in the late spring or early summer.

Rock Bass

(Insert figure of rock bass)

The rock bass is found in nearly all the larger rivers and in most of the lakes of the state. It is a popular pan fish, and one of the most easily caught. The large red eye, and the anal fin with 5 spines make this fish easy

to recognize. In common with all the members of the bass and sunfish family it spawns in the late spring or early summer, building a nest in shallow water. The nest, which is hollowed out in gravel or other suitable material, is guarded carefully by the male fish till the fry are old enough to fend for themselves.

Black Crappie

(Insert figure of black crappie)

The black crappie is a favorite with those fishermen who enjoy fishing for pan fish. It reaches a larger size than the other pan fish, and is a game fighter. It can be easily distinguished by the rather large oblique mouth, and the size of the anal fin which is as large as the dorsal. Its habits are not so well known as other members of the sunfish family.

Common Sucker

(Insert figure of common sucker)

The sucker is widely distributed over the whole state, being found in both streams and lakes. It sometimes becomes very abundant in lakes. The large head, with the inferior sucking mouth and the large fins make this fish readily recognizable. Its mouth is admirably suited to its bottom feeding habits. It spawns in shallow riffles, or along the gravelly shoals of lakes in the early spring.

Northern Pike

(Insert figure of northern pike)

The northern pike is abundant in most of the shallow, plant-filled lakes of the state and is a popular game fish. It can be easily recognized as a pike by the absence of spines and the position of the dorsal fin, back by the tail.

It has the snout shaped like the bill of a duck, and jaws armed with long, sharp teeth. Half of the opercular cover is naked of scales, and the cheeks are fully scaled, setting it aside from the other members of the pike family. It feeds almost exclusively on fish. It spawns in the early spring in weedy swamps.

Yellow Perch

(Insert figure of yellow perch)

The perch is a close second to the bluegill in popularity as a pan fish. It is very abundant in nearly all the lakes of the state, and in many of the larger rivers. It can be easily recognized by the high, spiny dorsal fin, and the dark vertical bars on the sides. It spawns in the very early spring. The long, jelly-like string of eggs is commonly found attached to vegetation or brush.

Wall-eyed Pike

(Insert figure of wall-eyed pike)

The wall-eye is a member of the perch family as indicated by the spiny dorsal fin. It has earned the name of pike because of its voracious feeding habits, and its long jaws armed with sharp teeth. It is a popular game fish, though perhaps not so widely distributed as some of the other game fish in Michigan. It spawns in the early spring along rocky shores.

(Drawings are traced from The Fishes of Illinois by Stephen Alfred Forbes and Robert Earl Richardson)

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