

The Bluegill



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FSFF
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LOTS OF FUN IN A SMALL PACKAGE

Let's Make This Interactive

Ask questions as I go

Feel free to add to the discussion

We'll learn from each other



How to hold a bluegill without getting stuck by fins.

Agenda

About the Fish

- Trivia
- Habitat
- Ecology
- Spawning

How to Catch Them

- Fly Rods & Reels
- Lines and Leaders
- Flies
- Tools
- Techniques

Locations

- Tidal Creeks
- Ponds



Bluegill Trivia

Member of **Centrarchidae** Family (sunfishes) which includes the Largemouth Bass, Smallmouth Bass, and Crappie (34 species in all)

Genus/Species: **Lepomis Macrochirus** (Scaled gill cover & Large hand)

Thirteen Lepomis Species – Evolved from Black Bass 25M years ago

Hybridizes naturally (22 variants) and in hatcheries (BG x Green Sunfish)

Bluegill names: Bream, Brim, Sunny, Roach, Perch, Copper Nose

Native to North America freshwater east of the Rocky Mountains

Introduced throughout the US, Europe, S. America, S. Africa and Asia

Bluegill Trivia

Females are lighter in color than males, especially during the spawn
(Males have deep orange bellies; females have yellow/white bellies)

Color intensity of both sexes fades in winter

Nimble – Fast, darting movements, excellent backward swimmers
(Rarely use caudal fin for propulsion, rely on pectoral fins)

Maryland record is 3 pounds 7 ounces from Deep Creek Lake in 1998

IGFA record is 4 pounds, 12 ounces from Alabama in 1950

State fish of Illinois – An interesting subplot: **“The Fish That Ate Japan”**

Bluegill Trivia

1960: Chicago mayor gives 18 bluegills to Japan's Crown Prince Akihito



Emperor Akihito

Akihito (amateur ichthyologist) was thrilled

Japan loved the bluegills, named them the “Prince Fish”

Bluegills loved Japan – especially Lake Biwa (Crucian Carp)

Japan promoted bluegills as food, but...

Offered bounties -- \$3 per kilo (Too expensive)

1970s -- LM Bass introduced in Lake Biwa

2007...“My heart aches to see it has turned out like this,”

Genome editing – a possible solution

Bluegill Habitat

Shallow slow moving freshwater creeks, streams and ponds

Reside near vegetation and structure to hide/escape from predators

Homebodies – Small range --Do not venture far in a pond or stream

Prefer waters 60 - 80 degrees Fahrenheit

Favor shaded areas under trees/shorelines

Retreat to deeper water in winter



Bluegill Ecology

Diet – Insects, Worms, Leeches, Crayfish, Snails, Minnows, Algae

An adult will eat 30 percent of its body weight weekly in summer

Daylight feeders, especially dawn and dusk

Topwater and subsurface feeders

School up by size – Safety in numbers

Can grow to 12 inches -- rate slows with age

Lifespan is 8 to 11 yrs. – Reproduce at 1 to 2 yrs.



Bluegill Spawning

Triggered by water temperature – 67 to 72 degrees Fahrenheit

Males make nests in colonies; mating largely occurs in one day

Male circles in nest to attract mate -- Size of male matters to female

Threesomes happen – Interloping males
(Sneakers and Mimics)

After mating, male chases female from nest

She seeks other males and lays more eggs

Eggs hatch in 2 to 5 days – **Male guards them**

Male is single parent – up to 10 days



Bluegill Spawning

Not all bluegills spawn in a body of water at the same time

Different areas of a pond or creek may have different temperatures

Remember – Bluegills do not range far

Spawning may continue through summer

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO TARGET NESTS

There will always be non-nesting fish to catch

But if you catch a big male...



How to Catch Them Gear

My Preferences

- 5 wt. Rod & Matching Reel
(Bass and Pickerel hit bluegill flies)
- WF Floating Line
(Bluegills are a shallow water fish spring to fall)
- 8 to 9 Foot Mono Tapered Leader
(10 # Tippet – Bluegills are not leader shy)
- Forceps to remove flies
- Clippers to change flies



How to Catch Them Flies

My Preferences

- Larger than recommended
(Size 6 and up)
- Foam Poppers, Gurglers and Spiders
(Flies with rubber legs)
- Woolly Buggers, Bully Buggers, Bluegill Bullies



How to Catch Them

Techniques

Patience is key

- Slow, short strips -- very deliberate fly retrievals
- Watch line tip when fishing streamers
- Let topwater flies sit motionless -- then twitch

Dropper under topwater fly or float

Cast to shaded areas with calm surfaces
(Not necessarily tight to shore)

Cast into gaps and edges of pads

Trout set is sufficient to hook fish -- taut line

Catches on consecutive casts are common



Locations

Bluegills are close to you

- Upper reaches of tidal creeks
- Community Ponds
(Good for access on foot)
- Lakes and Eastern Shore Millponds

My Favorite Bluegill Sites

- **Blairs Pond, Millsboro, DE**
(Large fish – 9+ inches and hybrids)
- **Unicorn Lake, Millington, MD**
(Most colorful bluegills -- pumpkinseeds too)
- **Trap Pond, Laurel, DE**
(High counts but most top out at 8 inches)



Blairs Pond



23 Acres

60 miles from Annapolis

Free entry

**Limited shore access
(Near dam)**

Community on west

Hiking path on east

Good bass fishing

Unicorn Lake



43 Acres

52 miles from Annapolis

Free entry

Limited shore access

Near dam

Near Ramp

Excessive nutrient load

Good pickerel fishing

Trap Pond



90 Acres

78 miles from Annapolis

Shore access

Near dam

Picnic Area

Campground

Launch fee

Site of FSFF Picnic

20 May 2023

Parting Shots



Coming Full Circle

The Importance of Bluegills to Fly Anglers



40 years later: Adam fly fishing for bluegills

- Often the first fish we catch
- Great teachers for new fly anglers
- They're nearby and willing to take our flies
- They're a fish that we revisit throughout our lives
- They live in waters easy for us to fish as we age

2023 FSFF Bluegill Tournament



Dates

- 1 April to 15 November

Awards for:

- 5 largest fish (in inches)
- Smallest (in inches)

Overall Winner (Largest)

- Name on clubhouse plaque

We accept all Lepomis entries

Complete rules on FSFF Website

Thank you for your attention!



Questions & Discussion

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For a PDF version of slides