

Redbreast Sunfish

Lepomis auritus

STATUS	Not Listed 	Not Listed 
Special Concern 	Not Listed 	Not Listed 



DRAWING BY DUANE RAYER

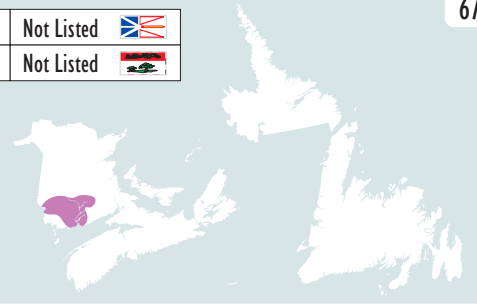
Species Description

The Redbreast Sunfish is a small (13-18 cm) species of freshwater fish. Its body is laterally compressed and proportionately tall between its spiny dorsal fins and its belly. Its back is typically dark golden brown or olive, and its sides are lighter coloured. Its breast is usually yellowish to orange-red, hence its common name. The Redbreast Sunfish is easily recognized by its gill flap, which is completely black.



© CHARLES AND CLINTON ROBERTSON, FLECR

Occurs in watersheds east of Appalachian Mountains; Canadian population limited to parts of Saint John River watershed.



Habitat

The Redbreast Sunfish is found in slower waters of rivers and larger streams with rocky or gravelly bottoms, and also along vegetated lake margins over a variety of substrates ranging from sand to mud. It prefers clean, clearer waters with lots of places to hide (like woody debris, vegetation, and beaver lodges). Redbreast Sunfish are inactive in winter, and gather in deeper waters until ice-out.



© DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE



© DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE

Currently known from roughly 15 sites (lakes and rivers) in the lower Saint John River watershed.

Interesting Points

- It mostly feeds on immature insects like caddis flies, shrimp-like freshwater bugs, roundworms, and midges.
- In late spring, males defend a territory in shallow waters and eventually excavate a circular nest in which the female lays eggs in early summer; the male then guards the eggs until they hatch.



© DEANNA MCCULLUM

Fishers can help by reporting any Redbreast Sunfish they accidentally catch

Similar Species

Pumpkinseed Sunfish:

Gill flap is black with a white or yellowish edge and with a red spot at the tip.



DRAWINGS BY DOANNE RAVER

Smallmouth Bass:

Lack of dark-coloured gill flap. An invasive alien species.

Threats to Survival

- Declines in water quality due to shoreline development, agricultural activities, and the loss of riparian buffers from forestry operations.
- Hydroelectric dams may restrict movement and dispersal of Redbreast Sunfish.
- Predation by Chain Pickerel and competition from other introduced fish species may be a threat.
- Potential hybridization with Pumpkinseed Sunfish.



PHOTO BY KEN HAMMOND, USDA

Chain Pickerel, an invasive exotic fish species



© DEREK WILSON

Water quality research and monitoring

How You Can Help

Keep lake and river waters clean by avoiding nutrient and pesticide runoff. Protect fish habitat on your land by leaving a buffer of trees along the water's edge. Help prevent the spread of invasive fish by avoiding the use of these species for bait, and by keeping your fishing and watersports equipment clean and free of debris that might be carrying fish eggs.

Contacts, Information & Sighting Reports

Contact: NB DNR (506) 453-3826

Info: www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca

Sighting Reports: www.speciesatrisk.ca/sightings