

Fishing for Fun

Background:

Many West Virginians fish and can identify some of the fish they catch. For more of a challenge, learning to identify fish when they are in the water can be lots of fun. The following fish identification cards will help the beginning (and sometimes experienced) angler learn how to correctly identify four of the most common fish caught in the Mountain State.

Objectives:

Beginning anglers have fun learning how to identify commonly caught fish, and learning more information about the fish living in West Virginia.

Method:

Cut out and use the fish cards to identify common species, and learn about these species. Then, go fishing to see if you can catch any of the featured fish.

Materials:

Fish cards, fishing equipment, ruler, pencil, journal (optional), fish scale (optional)

Fish online:

- Commemorate catching a first fish with a cool certificate at: wvdnr.gov/Fishing/First_Fish.shtm
- Catch a whopper? You might qualify for a trophy fish citation. Visit this link for details: wvdnr.gov/fishing/TroFishCitPrgm.shtm
- Want to learn about more fish? Check out: wvdnr.gov/fishing/sport_fish.asp
- Want to know all of the records for largest fish caught in the Mountain State? See: wvdnr.gov/fishing/Regs13/State_Records.pdf
- For license information, go to: wvdnr.gov/fishing/license.shtm

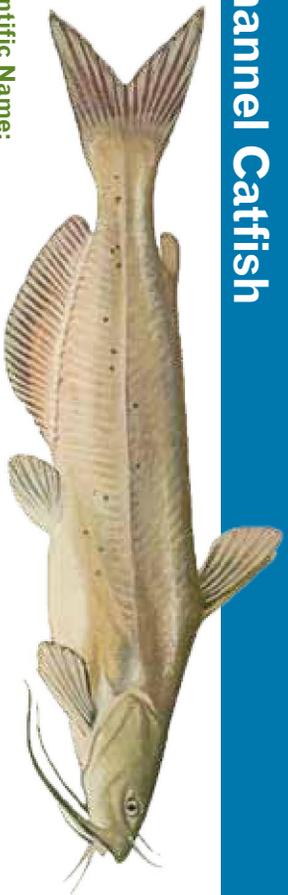


What to do:

1. Cut out and read the fish identification cards. Look at the map of West Virginia to see where each species lives. Figure out which fish live in your area.
2. Plan a fishing trip. Make a list of what you will need, including clothing, shoes, equipment, bait, snacks, water, and license for anyone 15 or older who will be fishing or handling fishing equipment or bait.
3. Look on a map to see where you will be fishing.
4. Check the weather forecast to make sure you dress appropriately, and that lightning will not be an issue.
5. Go fishing! Note in your journal the fish you caught. A data sheet might have the following information: date, time, location, temperature and precipitation. For each fish caught, you might want to note: species, length, weight, and where you caught it (near shore, far from shore, near vegetation, open water), and what lure or bait you used.
6. As you are fishing, see if you can tell the different species of fish apart while they are still in the water.

If you don't catch any fish, enjoy being outside, noticing all the sights and sounds of other kinds of wildlife. You might even see some fish in the water that you just can't catch.

Channel Catfish



Scientific Name:
Ictalurus punctatus

Length: Up to 40.3 inches.

Weight: Up to 33.42 pounds.

Key Features:

Barbells, or “whiskers”, fleshy adipose fin behind dorsal fin, forked tails, and spots along their sides.

Habitat: Deep waters in rivers and lakes.

Facts:

Catfish spawn in hidden places, like under rock ledges or in hollow logs.

Distribution: All major river systems in West Virginia.



Bluegill



Scientific Name:
Lepomis macrochirus

Length:

Up to 13.75 inches

Weight:

Up to 2.75 pounds

Key Features:

Small, dark “ear” fin, dark spot at back of dorsal fin.

Habitat:

Streams, ponds or lakes with dense aquatic vegetation.

Facts: Male bluegills build and defend nests.

Distribution:

All major river systems in West Virginia.



Largemouth Bass



Scientific Name:
Micropterus salmoides

Length: Up to 25.75 inches.

Weight: Up to 12.28 pounds.

Key Features: Mouth extends beyond eyes to each side.

Habitat: Clear, slow water with underwater plants.

Facts:

A largemouth bass nest can be under water 90 feet deep.

Distribution: All major river systems in West Virginia.



Eastern Brook Trout



Scientific Name:
Salvelinus fontinalis

Length: Up to 23.5 inches.

Weight: Up to 7.6 pounds.

Key Features:

Fleshy adipose fin behind dorsal fin. White bars in front of bottom fins.

Habitat: Clear, cold, fast-moving streams.

Facts:

The brook trout is West Virginia's only native trout, and our state fish.

Distribution: Naturally reproducing populations limited to Eastern mountain counties; stocked in a majority of counties.



Bluegill

Lepomis macrochirus



WV Dept. of Commerce/Steve Shaluta

Channel Catfish

Ictalurus punctatus



WV Dept. of Commerce/Steve Shaluta

Eastern Brook Trout

Salvelines fontinalis



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Eric Engbretson

Largemouth Bass

Micropterus salmoides



WV Dept. of Commerce/Steve Shaluta