

INVASIVE SPECIES ALERT!

BLUEGILL

(Lepomis macrochirus)

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS ANIMAL?

DESCRIPTION

Bluegills...

- Are olive-green to brown on the backside, with a blue or purplish sheen along the sides.
- Have 10 strong spines on the dorsal fin.
- Have a black operculum flap (over gills) in adults.
- Have a prominent dark spot on the posterior end of the dorsal fin.
- Can have a rusty coloured breast and greenish or bluish sheen on the head and body (breeding males).



Image credit: Nick Tobler, iNaturalist (CC-BY)

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PRIMARY THREAT:

Little is known about the impacts bluegills are having on aquatic ecosystems in B.C. In other regions where bluegills are invasive, they compete for food and habitat, and predate on native species.

SPREAD

Bluegills have been introduced around the world for the main purpose of sport fishing. They are likely to have entered B.C. from the Washington portion of Osoyoos Lake. Adult bluegills feed on snails, small crayfish, insects, worms, and small minnows. They can adapt their diet to suit local food availability, which lends to their ability to thrive in new areas. Bluegills tend to nest in colonies, with males competing for female attention. Females lay 2,000 to 40,000 eggs during a single breeding season, and males guard the eggs and young fry.

Little is known about bluegill habitat use in B.C. In their native range, bluegills are found in warm, shallow lakes, ponds, reservoirs, and slow-moving streams. They tend to be found within or near weed beds in the littoral zone.



Image credit: Hanfei Zhang, iNaturalist (CC-BY-NC)

For more information: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/invasive-species>



BLUEGILL (*Lepomis macrochirus*)

DISTRIBUTION & STATUS

Bluegills are native to American states that border the St. Lawrence, Great Lakes, and Mississippi River basin, extending south to the Gulf of Mexico, and as far southwest as the Texas-Mexico border. Bluegills have been found in the southern interior of B.C. (Osoyoos Lake and Vaseux Lake), and are now present in the Lower Mainland.

LOOK-ALIKES:

Bluegills may be confused for Pumpkinseeds (*Lepomis gibbosus*), an invasive species that co-exists with Bluegills in Osoyoos Lake. Adults of the two species differ in the colour of their operculum flap (gill cover). The flap is **blue-black in the Bluegill** and **tipped red for the Pumpkinseed** (red arrow, right image below).

In addition, Bluegills have a **dark spot at the posterior base of the dorsal (top) fin** (red arrow, left image below).



Bluegill

Pumpkinseed

Image credit: Mark Kenderdine (CC-BY-NC)

Image credit: Noel M. Burkhead, USGS (CCO)



Image credit: Micah Shiverly, iNaturalist (CC-BY-NC)

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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Do not transfer and/or release live fish into the wild in BC. **It is illegal!**
- Never use live fish as bait.
- Before purchasing an aquarium fish, consider how you are going to take care of it in the long term.
- Do not release captive aquarium or pond fish into the wild as they could become invasive.
- Raise awareness to avoid the spread of invasive fish in B.C.

DID YOU KNOW?

Bluegills tend to hide themselves in underwater shelter, such as old, submerged tree stumps or aquatic vegetation.



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