# Quick ID Features for Baitfish

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Common Bait Fish At a Glance

Golden Shiner

Fathead Minnow

Striped Shiner

Emerald Shiner

Common White Sucker

Creek Chub

Northern Hog Sucker

Gizzard Shad
Common Minnows: Family Cyprinidae

Generally small (less than 7 inches), no spines (except carp and goldfish). More than 45 species in Ohio. Fathead minnows commonly called “crappie minnow” or “bass minnow” based on their size.
Suckers: Family Catostomidae

Can grow large (greater than 24 inches). No spines; downturned soft fleshy mouth. About 20 species in Ohio. Common white suckers and northern hogsuckers are commonly used as catfish or musky bait.
Gizzard Shad: Family Clupeidae

Moderate sized fish (up to 20 inches). Extremely abundant member of the herring family found throughout Ohio and an important prey species. They are oily, “smelly” fish, making them popular as baitfish.
Skipjack Herring: Family Clupeidae

Can grow large (greater than 15 inches). Upturned, bony plated mouth. Common in Ohio River and very popular as live or cut bait for catfish and hybrid striped bass.

Photo by: Brian Zimmerman
Smelt (Rainbow): Family Osmeridae

Can grow over 12 inches long. Found in Lake Erie and its tributaries. Has an adipose fin, similar to trout and catfish.
Brook Silverside: Family Atherinidae

Small fish (less than 4 inches) found in streams and lakes across Ohio. Translucent body with beak-like mouth and large eye.
Brook Stickleback: Family Gasterosteidae

Small fish (less than 3 inches). Five distinct spines on back and narrow caudal peduncle (area in front of tail). Prefers cold streams north of the glacial boundary line (not common in south eastern Ohio).
Trout-Perch: Family Percopsidae

Small fish (less than 5 inches). Only Ohio fish with an adipose fin (similar to trout and catfish) and ctenoid scales (rough scales similar to sunfish). Scattered populations, not as common in western Ohio.
Sculpins: Family Cottidae

Small fish (less than 5 inches). Frog-like face with eyes high on the head, scaleless body and thin flexible dorsal spines. Common in streams with good flow and riffles.
Darters: Family Percidae

Generally smaller fish (less than 7 inches). Related to yellow perch, walleye, sauger and saugeye. Thin spines on dorsal and anal fins. Large pectoral fins. There are more than 20 species of darters found in streams and lakes throughout Ohio, some very common and others extremely rare.
Blackstripe Topminnow: Family Fundulidae

Small fish (less than 3 inches). Strongly upturned mouth to feed near the water’s surface. Dorsal fin far back on body, distinct black stripe along body’s midline. Rounded, oar-like tail and speckling in the fins. More common in western Ohio streams and near-shore in some lakes.
Central Mud Minnow: Family Umbridae

Small fish (less than 5 inches). Rounded caudal fin, heavily mottled coloration of body. Prefers clear water and organic debris/muck substrate.
Separating the Carp

1: Lower jaw extends well beyond upper jaw
2: Scales much smaller in ratio to body size
**Silver Carp (Invasive)**

- Silver in color
- No scales on head
- Very small scales
- Downward slanting mouth (frown) and no barbels
- Keel extends length of belly
- Low set eyes

**Bighead Carp (Invasive)**

- Dark blotches along the back (dorsal) region
- No scales on head
- Keel extends partway along belly
- Downward slanting mouth (frown) and no barbels
- Low set eyes
Grass Carp
(Fertile fish Invasive)
- Eyes sit even with the mouth
- Pointy shaped face and no barbels

Black Carp
(Invasive)
- Eyes sit even with the mouth
- Pointy shaped face and no barbels
- Teeth that look like human molars
Silver Carp, Bighead Carp and Golden Shiner

**Silver Carp (Invasive)**
- Scaleless Keel

**Bighead Carp (Invasive)**
- 91-124 lateral line scales
- Scaleless Keel
- 85-100 lateral line scales

**Golden Shiner (Native)**
- Smaller head, larger scales for size of fish.
- Scaleless Keel

Photo by: Brian Zimmerman

42-54 lateral line scales
Silver Carp, Bighead Carp, Mooneye and Goldeye

Silver and Bighead Carp (Invasive)
Dorsal fin forward of anal fin

Goldeye and Mooneye (Native)
Dorsal fin directly over anal fin
Silver Carp, Bighead Carp and Skipjack Herring

Silver Carp (Invasive)
No scales on keel.

Skipjack Herring (Native)
Eye high on head, bony plated mouth and scales on keel give saw-like appearance.

Keel with saw-like scales
Silver Carp, Bighead Carp and Gizzard Shad

**Silver Carp (Invasive)**
No scales on keel.

**Gizzard Shad (Native)**
Rounded snout, conspicuous dark spot behind head, keel with saw-like scales.

Keel with saw-like scales
Bowfin, Burbot and Snakehead

Bowfin (Native): Two short barbels on nose and short anal fin

Burbot (Native): Single long chin barbel and short first dorsal fin, no scales

Snakehead (Invasive): No barbels on head, extremely long single dorsal fin and anal fin
Blackstripe Topminnow and Northern Studfish

Blackstripe Topminnow (Native)

Blackstripe Topminnow has one thick dark band down side, the northern studfish has narrow horizontal rows. The northern studfish has conspicuous white/yellow wedge just in front of dorsal fin.

Northern Studfish (Invasive)
Mottled Sculpin, Tubenose Goby and Round Goby

Mottled Sculpin (Native)
Mottled Sculpin has unbranched rays supporting the soft dorsal and anal fins. Pelvic fins separate.

Tubenose Goby (Invasive)
Gobies have branched rays in soft dorsal and anal fins. Pelvic fins are fused together to form a cup shape.

Round Goby (Invasive)
Yellow Perch, White Bass and Eurasian Ruffe

Both Yellow Perch and White Bass have a complete separation between the spiny and soft dorsal fin, Eurasian Ruffe is broadly connected.

Yellow Perch (Native)

White Bass (Native)

Eurasian Ruffe (Invasive)
White Bass (Native)
White Bass (WB) body with horizontal lines and deepest below spiny dorsal, White Perch (WP) has no lines other than lateral line and body is deepest before spiny dorsal. WB has “flat top” body shape, WP more slanted like Freshwater Drum. WB 3 anal spines ascend in length, WP 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} anal spines similar length

White Perch (Invasive)

Freshwater Drum (Native)
Brook Stickleback, 3 spine and 9 spine Sticklebacks

Brook Stickleback (Native)

3 spine Stickleback (Invasive)

9 spine Stickleback (Invasive)
Channel Catfish and Bullheads

Channel Catfish
(Native)

Bullhead
(Nuisance)
Perch and Sander: Family Percidae

Darters do not have the sharp, conical teeth of a walleye, sauger or saugeye.

Greenside Darter - Male

Greenside Darter - Female

Rainbow Darter

Logperch Darters have a slim, torpedo shaped body and hog-like snout compared to a Yellow Perch.

Logperch Darter

Walleye

Sauger

Saugeye

Yellow Perch