

Fish

Illustrations by Joseph Tomelleri

IDENTIFICATION

guide

This pocket guide is designed to help anglers learn more about the common fish of Kansas. It is not a comprehensive list of fish species.

For fishing regulation information, consult the current printing of the “Kansas Fishing Regulation Summary.”

White Bass



Native to eastern Kansas rivers, white bass have been stocked in reservoirs throughout the state. They have a single tooth patch on the rear of their tongue. They are an excellent sport fish, commonly weighing 1-3 pounds. The spring spawning run is a great time to catch white bass in rivers and streams above reservoirs. Later in the summer, feeding whites will pin shad schools on the surface, providing exciting topwater angling. The state record white bass weighed 5.67 pounds and was caught by Marvin W. Gary from the Neosho River above John Redmond Reservoir in 2002. The world record white bass weighed 6.81 pounds, and was caught from the Amite River, Louisiana in 2010.

Wiper



Wipers are a hybrid of white bass and striped bass, which grow fast and fight hard. Populations are maintained through stocking. Small wipers look much like white bass, but they have distinct, broken horizontal stripes and will usually have two tooth patches on the rear of their tongue. Casting bucktail jigs or topwater plugs in spring and early summer is the most exciting way to catch them. Live bait fished along deep dropoffs and river channels is also effective. The state record wiper weighed 25 pounds and was caught from the Perry Reservoir spillway by James Moore in 2010. The world record wiper weighed 27.31 pounds and was caught in 1997 from Greers Ferry Lake in Arkansas.

Striped Bass



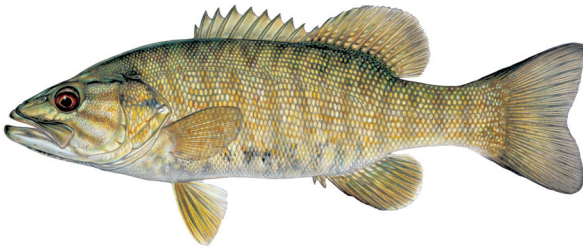
The striped bass is a saltwater native that was trapped in a freshwater reservoir in South Carolina. Learning that stripers could flourish in fresh water, biologists began stocking them in other impoundments. Kansas waters do not provide adequate spawning conditions, so populations are maintained through stocking. Striped bass are temperature sensitive, and fishing is usually best in winter, spring and early summer. Live bait and trolling deep-running lures are the most common methods. The state record striper weighed 44 pounds and was caught from Wilson Reservoir by Paul Barr in 2012. The world record freshwater striper weighed 67.06 pounds and was caught in 1997 from the Colorado River in Arizona.

Largemouth Bass



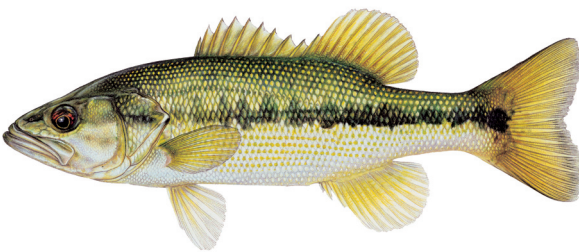
The largemouth bass is native to many Kansas streams and has been stocked in most reservoirs, lakes, and ponds. A member of the black basses, which includes smallmouth and spotted bass, the largemouth is one of the most popular sport fish. Largemouths are usually found near aquatic vegetation or other structure. The largemouth's upper jaw extends beyond the eye. April and May are the best months to fish for largemouths. Best lures include spinner-baits, jig-and-pig combinations, plastic worms, and crankbaits. The state record largemouth weighed 11.8 pounds and was caught in 2008 from a Cherokee County pit lake by Tyson Hallam. The world record largemouth bass was caught in 1932 from Montgomery Lake in Georgia and weighed 22.25 pounds.

Smallmouth Bass



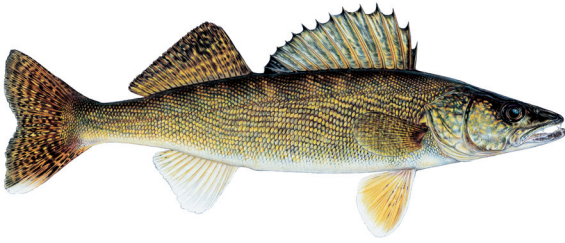
Smallmouth bass are native to just a few streams in southeastern Kansas, but they have been stocked in several lakes and reservoirs. Smallmouths prefer clear water around rip-rap and rocky points. Brown to olive-green markings and an upper jaw that does not extend beyond the eye distinguish the smallmouth. The best months to catch smallmouths include April, May, and June. Best baits include curly-tail jigs, tube jigs, spinner baits, and crankbaits. The state record smallmouth weighed 6.88 pounds and was caught in 2010 from Milford Reservoir by Frank Evans Jr. The world record smallmouth weighed 11.94 pounds and was caught in 1955 from Kentucky's Dale Hollow Reservoir.

Spotted Bass



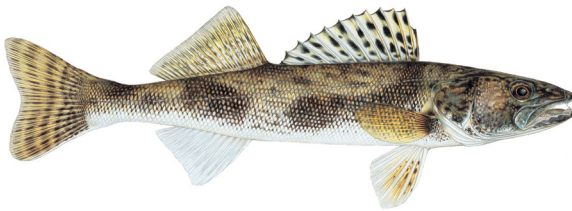
Spotted bass, or Kentucky bass, are native to the clear streams of the Flint Hills. They have been stocked in several reservoirs and lakes. The upper jaw does not extend beyond the eye, and they have distinct dark-green, diamond-shaped blotches along the upper half of the body. They also may have rows of dark spots along the lower belly. Small jigs, spinners, crankbaits, wooly worms, wooly buggers, and poppers are best baits. The state record spotted bass weighed 4.44 pounds and was caught from Marion County Lake in 1977 by Clarence E. McCarter. The world record spotted bass weighed 10.25 pounds and was caught in 2001 from Pine Flat Lake in California.

Walleye



Walleye may have been present in eastern Kansas rivers but disappeared before being officially documented. Stocked in many Kansas reservoirs, the walleye is a member of the perch family, named for the glassy-eyed stare. The spiny dorsal fin has a distinct dark blotch at its rear base. Walleye are popular with fishermen, both for the challenge in finding and catching them consistently and for their delicious white meat. April, May and early June are best months to catch them. Fishermen troll crankbaits or drift jigs with live bait. The state record walleye weighed 13.16 pounds and was caught from Wilson Reservoir by Dustin Ritter in 1996. The world record walleye weighed 22.69 pounds and was caught in 1982 from Greers Ferry Lake in Arkansas.

Sauger



Sauger are common in the Missouri River, and some may have migrated to the Kansas River from the Missouri. Sauger resemble the walleye but are generally smaller and have distinct blotches on the side. The dorsal fin is colorless with black spots. Their cheeks are scaled, while the walleye's are usually smooth. Sauger have been stocked into several Kansas reservoirs where walleye populations could not be sustained because of high flow-through. Drifting jigs or spinner rigs tipped with bait over main-lake points and mudflats is the preferred angling technique. The state record weighed 4.8 pounds and was caught by Jimmy Barnes in 1996 from Melvern Reservoir. The world record sauger weighed 8.75 pounds and was caught from North Dakota's Lake Sakakawea in 1971.

Saugeye



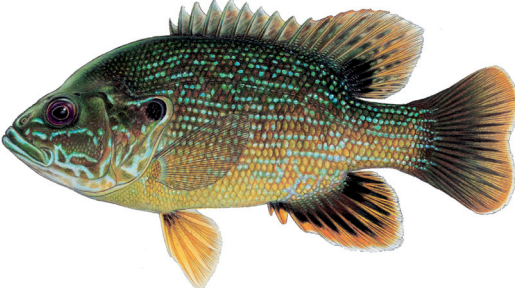
The saugeye is a hybrid of a sauger and walleye. Like other hybrids, the saugeye is hardy and grows fast. The saugeye's spiny dorsal fin is spotted and also has a blotch at the rear base, and its cheek is scaled. Saugeye are caught drifting flats and main-lake points with jig-and-night crawler combinations and trolling crankbaits. The first Kansas saugeye were stocked in 1990. The current state record weighed 9.81 pounds and was caught from Sebelius Reservoir by Raymond Wait in 1998. The world record saugeye weighed 15 pounds, 10 ounces and was caught from Fort Peck Reservoir in Montana in 1995.

Bluegill



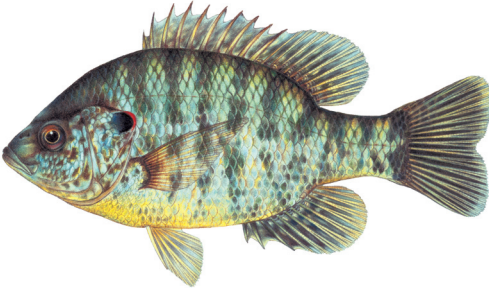
Bluegill are native to eastern Kansas streams and have been stocked in ponds and lakes throughout the state. A saucer-shaped sunfish with a namesake blue tab on its gill cover, the bluegill is a popular sport fish that readily takes bait or small lures. It is a fine eating fish as well. Early June when they move into the shallows and dish out small nests for spawning is a great time to catch them. Fly gear is particularly effective at this time. The state record bluegill weighed 2.31 pounds and was caught from a Scott County farm pond by Robert Jefferies in 1962. The world record bluegill weighed 4.75 pounds and was caught from Ketona Lake in Alabama in 1950.

Green Sunfish



The green sunfish is one of the most abundant sunfish in Kansas. It has the blue tab on its gill cover, but is somewhat less saucer shaped than the bluegill and has a noticeably larger mouth. Fins are usually edged in yellow. The green sunfish, or "greenie," is a great fish for kids and will nearly always hit small baits and lures. The state record green sunfish weighed 2.36 pounds (and although not officially listed as the world record, it is 3.76 ounces larger than the current world record) and was caught from a Russell County farm pond by Fae Vaupel in 1982.

Redear Sunfish



The redear sunfish is an introduced species stocked in small lakes and farm ponds. It is similar in shape to the bluegill and has a red trim around the tab on its gill cover. Redears get bigger than bluegill and are generally more difficult to catch. Called shellcrackers in the South, redears will feed on snails and other mollusks. Redears generally prefer deeper water than other sunfishes and are not usually found near shorelines. The state record redear weighed 1.69 pounds and was caught from a pond on the Finney Wildlife Area by Larry Fox in 1995. The world record redear weighed 5.5 pounds and was caught in 2011 from Lake Havasu in Arizona.

Longnose Gar



The longnose gar is native to most of the rivers in the eastern half of Kansas and is the most abundant and largest of the three gar species. It is greenish in color with dark spots on its sides and fins and can be distinguished by its long, narrow snout, which is more than twice as long as the distance between the edge of the eye and the back of the head. The bony mouth makes it almost impossible to hook, so anglers use spinners with nylon thread instead of hooks. The nylon tangles in the fine teeth that line the jaws. The state record longnose gar weighed 31.5 pounds and was caught from Perry Reservoir by Ray Schroeder in 1974. The world record longnose weighed 50.31 pounds and was caught from the Trinity River in Texas in 1954.

Shortnose Gar



The shortnose gar has jaws less than twice the length of its head and has spots on its fins but differs from the spotted gar by never having spots on its head. The shortnose gar is common only in the larger rivers of eastern Kansas. Most shortnose gar are less than 24 inches long. The state record weighed 7.30 pounds and was taken with bow and arrow from Milford Reservoir by Luke Visser in 2013. The rod and reel world record shortnose weighed 8.19 pounds and was caught in 2011 from Lake Contrary in Missouri.

Spotted Gar



The spotted gar has jaws less than twice the length of its head and is spotted with dark, round spots on the top and sides of its head. Most spotted gar are less than 30 inches long. Like other gars, it is covered with a tough armor of thick, heavy scales. It may be confined to the lower Neosho basin where it prefers still pools. The state record spotted gar weighed 7.75 pounds and was taken with bow and arrow from the Neosho River at Chetopa by Charles Harbert in 1983. The world record rod and reel spotted gar weighed 28.5 pounds and was caught from Lake Seminole in Florida in 1987.

Channel Catfish



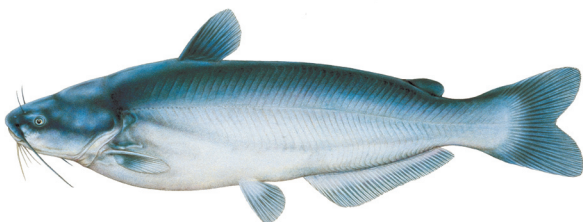
Millions of channel catfish are stocked in community, state, and urban fishing lakes each year. The smooth-skinned channel cat has a forked tail, and barbels, or whiskers, around the mouth. Smaller fish have silvery sides with black spots. The anal fin is rounded and has fewer than 30 supporting rays. Best baits include night crawlers, chicken livers, shad sides, and stinkbait. Reservoirs provide outstanding channel catfish populations often overlooked by anglers, and private farm ponds also provide great channel cat fishing. The state record channel catfish weighed 36.5 pounds and was caught from a Mined Land Wildlife Area lake by Richard Barnow in 2003. The world record channel catfish weighed 58 pounds and was caught from Santee Cooper Reservoir in South Carolina.

Flathead Catfish



The flathead catfish is a prized trophy fish in Kansas. Native to most of the state's rivers, the flathead has adapted well to reservoirs. Flatheads are generally much larger than channel cats, have a broad, flat head as the name implies, and have a square tail as opposed to the forked tail of the channel cat. Often called yellow cats or appaloosa cats, flatheads vary in color, ranging from a mottled brown to a pale yellow. Banklines, rod and reel, and trotlines are all popular methods, and live bait is necessary. The state record flathead is also the world record. It weighed 123 pounds and was caught by Ken Paulie from Elk City Reservoir in 1998.

Blue Catfish



The blue cat is native to rivers in northeast Kansas and is not nearly as common as channel or flathead catfish. Reports from around the turn of the century document blue cats weighing more than 150 pounds. While having a forked tail similar to the channel cat, the blue cat is often pale blue in color, sometimes nearly white or even dark blue/black. It has a noticeably humped back, and the anal fin is longer than that of a channel cat and has 30-35 supporting rays. The state record blue catfish weighed 102.8 pounds and was caught by Robert Stanley in 2012 from the Missouri River. The world record blue cat weighed 143 pounds and was caught in 2011 from Kerr Lake in Virginia.

Bullhead Catfish



There are two species of bullheads in Kansas: the black and the yellow. The black bullhead is common in streams and ponds, and the yellow is less common, found mostly in the eastern half of the state. The yellow bullhead is dark-green or yellow-green with a white or yellowish belly. The black bullhead is usually larger than the yellow, and the barbels on the lower jaw are darker than the surrounding skin. The yellow's barbels on the lower jaw are white. Bullheads are great fish for young anglers, biting readily on worms, liver and dead bait. The state record black bullhead weighed 7.33 and was caught from a Montgomery County farm pond by David Tremain in 1985. The world record bullhead weighed 8.94 pounds and was caught in 1987 from Sturgis Pond in Michigan.

Black Crappie



The black crappie has been stocked in reservoirs, and especially in smaller lakes and ponds but is less abundant than the white crappie. Black crappie have a dark green, uniform speckled coloration with no vertical barring. There are seven or eight spines in the dorsal fin. Black crappie prefer clear lakes or ponds and are not as prone to overpopulating as white crappie. April and May are best months to catch black crappie, and jigs, minnows, and small spinners are best baits. The state record black crappie weighed 4.63 pounds and was caught from Woodson State Fishing lake by Hazel Fey in 1957. The world record black crappie weighed 6 pounds and was caught from Westwego Canal in Louisiana.

White Crappie



The white crappie is one of the most abundant and popular sport fish in Kansas. Vertical barring evident in the speckled coloration on white crappie distinguish them from black crappie. White crappie have six spines in the spiny dorsal fin, while black crappie have seven or eight. White crappie are generally found in large schools. April and May are the best months to catch white crappie, and best baits include minnows, jigs and small spinners. Their white meat is delicious. The state record white crappie weighed 4.02 pounds and was caught from a Greenwood County farm pond by Frank Miller in 1964. The world record white crappie weighed 5.19 pounds and was caught from Enid Dam in Mississippi in 1957.

Northern Pike



The northern pike is a rare introduced species. It was stocked in the late 1960s as a means of controlling panfish. However, few Kansas waters provide the northern with suitable habitat. The northern pike prefers clear, weedy water. Occasionally smaller lakes are stocked with northern pike to help control populations of undesirable fish, as well as provide anglers with an exciting opportunity. The state record northern pike weighed 24.75 pounds and was caught from Council Grove Reservoir by Mr. and Mrs. H.A. Bowman in 1971. The world record northern weighed 46.13 pounds and was caught from Sacandaga Reservoir in New York in 1940.

Paddlefish



Paddlefish are found in a few of the larger rivers of eastern Kansas, common only in the spring when they move upstream to spawn. A special snagging season, March 15 - May 15, opens on areas inside Chetopa and Burlington city parks on the Neosho River, the Neosho River at Iola downstream from dam to city limits, Marais des Cygnes River below Osawatomie Dam downstream to posted boundary, Marais des Cygnes River on the upstream boundary of the Marais des Cygnes Wildlife Area downstream to the Kansas-Missouri border, and on the Missouri River. The state record, caught in Atchison County, is also the world record. Clinton Boldridge caught the fish on May 5, 2004. It weighed 144 pounds.

Rainbow Trout



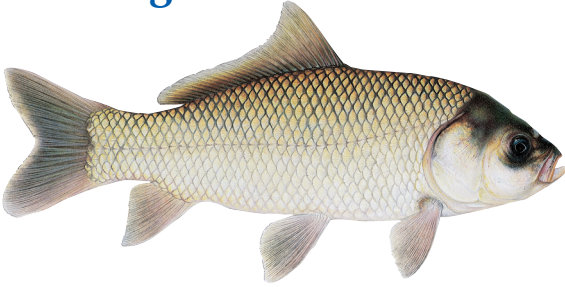
Rainbow trout provide a winter fishery where they are stocked. There are two places where trout do survive summer: a lake in the Mined Land Wildlife Area and Tuttle Creek State Park Willow Lake. Populations are maintained through winter stocking, and generally most of the stocked fish are caught during the Oct. 15-April 15 season. Anglers are required to have a trout stamp in addition to the required licenses. A variety of methods are popular, from fly tackle or spinners to worms fished on the bottom. The state record rainbow trout weighed 15.72 pounds and was caught from Kill Creek Park Lake by Josh McCullough in 2014. The world record rainbow trout weighed 48 pounds and was caught in 2009 from Lake Diefenbaker in Canada.

Drum



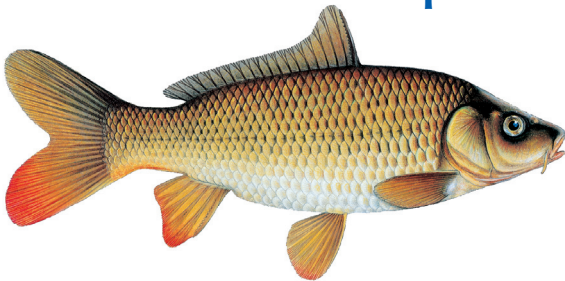
The drum is common in eastern Kansas rivers and streams and has adapted well to reservoirs. Also called sheepshead, the drum emits a grunting, or drumming, noise with special muscles that vibrate against the swim bladder. Jigs, jigs tipped with night crawlers and crankbaits will catch drum although a gob of worms stillfished might be the best technique. Although defined as a nonsport fish, their meat is white and tasty. The state record drum weighed 31.5 pounds and was caught from the Blue River by Bill Hull in 2008. The world record drum weighed 54.5 pounds and was caught from Tennessee's Nickajack Lake in 1972.

Bigmouth Buffalo



The bigmouth buffalo is native to the larger rivers of eastern Kansas and has become abundant in many reservoirs. The buffalo feeds on plankton and is considered a rough fish. With an angled sucker mouth, the buffalo doesn't feed on the bottom. At one time, it was an important commercial fish, and is still taken by commercial netters for fish markets. The buffalo prefers deep, still pools and can become quite numerous in oxbows and reservoirs. The state record bigmouth buffalo weighed 66 pounds and was caught from Cheney Reservoir by Trey Patterson in 2019. The world record bigmouth buffalo weighed 73.06 pounds and was caught from Lake Koshkonong in Wisconsin in 2004.

Common Carp



The common carp was brought to the U.S. from Asia in the late 19th century. Originally stocked for a sport fish, the adaptable carp was soon considered a nuisance. Carp are common in nearly all waters in Kansas. They feed mostly on invertebrates and green plant material. Anglers use dough baits or corn to catch carp, and they fight hard. Intermuscular bones make the meat less desirable, but it has many fans who have learned to prepare it properly. The state record carp weighed 47.1 pounds and was caught from Carey Park Lake in Hutchinson by Phil McAmis in 1997. The world record carp weighed 75.69 pounds and was caught from Lac de St. Cassien in France.

White Amur

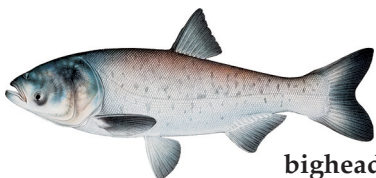


The white amur, or grass carp, is an introduced species brought from Asia. The grass carp's diet is entirely vegetation, and it has been stocked to control aquatic vegetation. Grass carp get big and are extremely powerful swimmers. Anglers have discovered they can be caught on small flies imitating bits of vegetation, and hooking a large grass carp can be a wild experience. Considered a nonsport fish, grass carp are legal bowfishing quarry. The state record grass carp weighed 77.75 pounds and was caught from Atchison State Fishing Lake by Kenneth Mosby Jr. in 2012. The world record weighed 78.75 pounds and was caught from the Flint River in Georgia.

Aquatic Nuisance Species



white perch



bighead carp



silver carp



zebra mussel



The species shown above are on the Prohibited Species List and may not be possessed alive. Any water infested with these aquatic nuisance species (ANS) is on the list of ANS-Designated Waters. No person may possess any live fish upon departure from any ANS-Designated water. This includes sportfish, non-sport fish, and baitfish.

Designated ANS waters shall be those specified in the KDWP's "Kansas designated aquatic nuisance waters table." This table may be found in the Kansas Fishing Regulations Summary, available wherever licenses are sold, or on the KDWP website, ksoutdoors.com.

In addition, livewells and bilges shall be drained and the drain plugs removed from all vessels being removed from ALL waters of the state before transport on any public highway.



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Aquatic nuisance species such as Asian carp, zebra mussels and white perch pose dire threats to our aquatic ecosystems and sport fish populations. Learn about preventing infestations here: ksoutdoors.com/aquatic-nuisance-species

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FISHING IN KANSAS CONTACT ONE OF THE OFFICES LISTED BELOW OR VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT: www.ksoutdoors.com

Office of the Secretary

1020 S Kansas Ave., Rm 200
Topeka, KS 66612
(785) 296-2281

Pratt Operations Office

512 SE 25th Ave.
Pratt, KS 67124
(620) 672-5911

Region 1 Office

1426 Hwy 183 Alt., PO Box 338
Hays, KS 67601-0338
(785) 628-8614

Region 2 Office

300 SW Wanamaker Rd.
Topeka, KS 66606
(785) 273-6740

Region 3 Office

6232 E 29th St. North
Wichita, KS 67220
(316) 683-8069

Chanute District Office

137 E 21st St.
Chanute, KS 66720
(620) 431-0380

Dodge City District Office

1001 W McArtor Rd.
Dodge City, KS 67801
(620) 227-8609

Kansas City District Office

8304 Hedge Lane Terr.
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(913) 422-1314

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