

Little Tennessee River Basin Fish List

Fish found in the Little Tennessee River Basin

Compiled by Little Tennessee Native Fish Conservation Partnership, 2015



Lamprey (Petromyzontidae)

These are primitive eel-like fish that lack jaws, scales, paired fins, and bone. The skeleton is composed of cartilage. They live in both fresh and salt water. Lampreys are river-spawning fish that swim upstream to spawn at sites excavated by removing stones in the stream bottom.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
American Brook Lamprey	<i>Lethenteron appendix</i>	X		
Chestnut Lamprey	<i>Ichthyomyzon castaneus</i>	X		
Mountain Brook Lamprey	<i>Ichthyomyzon greeleyi</i>	X		
Ohio Lamprey	<i>Ichthyomyzon bdellium</i>	X		

Sturgeon (Acipenseridae)

Sturgeon, along with paddlefish, gar, and bowfins are ancient fishes. Sturgeon have a suction mouth, and feed on insects, clams, snails, and other bottom-dwelling animals. The body is scaleless with bony plates. Sturgeon are very slow to reproduce and overfishing has diminished their populations. Water pollution and the damming of large rivers have contributed to their decline.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Lake Sturgeon	<i>Acipenser fulvescens</i>	X		

Paddlefish (Polyodontidae)

The paddlefish is a close relative of the sturgeon. Only one species of paddlefish is native to the United States. The huge snout (paddle) of paddlefish is covered with sensitive taste buds which may help locate plankton. A filterfeeder, the paddlefish can grow up to 200 pounds. Dams have caused a sharp decline in paddlefish distribution and abundance in the United States.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Paddlefish	<i>Polyodon spathula</i> , (ext)	X		

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Gar (Lepisosteidae)

Primitive, pike-like fishes, gar are easily recognized by their long, narrow, toothed jaws and diamond-shaped, non-overlapping scales. Gars have lung-like gas bladders that permit air breathing. This allows gars to live in low-oxygen conditions where they sometimes are observed floating at the water surface. Gars are predators on a wide variety of fish, ambushing their prey with a sudden attack.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Longnose Gar	<i>Lepisosteus osseus</i>	X		
Spotted Gar	<i>Lepisosteus oculatus</i>	X		

Mooneyes (Hiodontidae)

There are only two living species in the mooneye family, so named for the metallic shine of their eyes. Both species are native to North America – one preferring clearer waters, while the other preferring more turbid water. Both are predators, feeding on insects and other invertebrates, fish, and other animals.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Mooneye	<i>Hiodon tergisus</i>	X		

Eels (Anguillidae)

The American eel is the only eel species found in North American rivers. Adults migrate downstream into an area in the Atlantic Ocean known as the Sargasso Sea where they spawn and then die. The young are ribbon-like larvae that float and swim for one to three years in the ocean before returning to freshwater. Adults may remain in freshwater for as long as 15 years before returning to the ocean to spawn.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
American Eel	<i>Anguilla rostrate (ext)</i>	X		

Herring (Clupeidae)

Adult herrings are silvery, narrow-bodied fish ranging in size from 7.5-70 cm long. The "saw-toothed" belly of these fish is composed of sharp pointed scales that create the serrated front edge. They form dense schools which cruise the upper waters of lakes and reservoirs. Adults are filter feeders on plankton and algae. Fish in the herring family are an important link in the food chain because they feed on plankton and are preyed upon by sport fish.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Alewife	<i>Alosa pseudoharengus</i>		X	
Blueback Herring	<i>Alosa aestivalis</i>		X	
Gizzard Shad	<i>Dorosoma cepedianum</i>	X		
Skipjack Herring	<i>Alosa chrysochloris</i>	X		
Threadfin Shad	<i>Dorosoma petenense</i>	X		

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Minnows (Cyprinidae)

The largest and most diverse family of freshwater fishes in the world, with over 290 species in North America. Most are small shiners, dace, chubs, and minnows that school, feed on insects and algae, and serve as prey for sport fish; while some, such as the common carp, grow very large. Adults feed on plant and animal material, using their characteristic “throat” teeth for grinding weeds, clams, and insects. Some, such as the stoneroller, feed almost exclusively on algae by scraping it from rocks.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Bigeye Chub	<i>Hybopsis amblops</i>	X		
Blotched Chub	<i>Erimystax insignis</i>	X		
Bluehead Chub	<i>Nocomis leptocephalus</i>		X	
Bluntnose Minnow	<i>Pimephales notatus</i>	X		
Bullhead Minnow	<i>Pimephales vigilax</i>	X		
Central Stoneroller	<i>Campostoma anomalum</i>	X		
Common Carp	<i>Cyprinus carpio</i>		X	
Creek Chub	<i>Semotilus atromaculatus</i>	X		
Emerald Shiner	<i>Notropis atherinoides</i>	X		
Fathead Minnow	<i>Pimephales promelas</i>		X	
Fatlips Minnow	<i>Phenacobius crassilabrum</i>	X		E-GA
Flame Chub	<i>Hemitremia flammea</i>	X		D-TN
Golden Shiner	<i>Notemigonus crysoleucas</i>	X	X*	
Goldfish	<i>Carassius auratus</i>		X	
Highland Shiner	<i>Notropis micropteryx</i>	X		SR-NC
Largescale Stoneroller	<i>Campostoma oligolepis</i>	X		
Longnose Dace	<i>Rhinichthys cataractae</i>	X		
Mimic Shiner	<i>Notropis volucellus</i>	X		SR-NC
Mirror Shiner	<i>Notropis spectrunculus</i>	X		
Mississippi Silvery Minnow	<i>Hybognathus nuchalis</i>	X		
Mountain Shiner	<i>Lythrurus lirus</i>	X		
River Chub	<i>Nocomis micropogon</i>	X		
Rosyside Dace	<i>Clinostomus funduloides</i>	X		
Saffron Shiner	<i>Notropis rubricroceus</i>	X		
Sand Shiner	<i>Notropis stramineus</i>	X		
Sawfin Shiner	<i>Notropis sp. 4 (undescribed)</i>	X		
Shoal Chub	<i>Macrhybopsis hyostoma (ext)</i>	X		
Silver Chub	<i>Macrhybopsis storeriana</i>	X		
Silver Shiner	<i>Notropis photogenis</i>	X		
Smoky Dace	<i>Clinostomus sp.</i>	X		SC-NC, D-TN, SC-GA
Spotfin Chub	<i>Erimonax monachus</i>	X		T-Fed, T-NC, T-TN

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Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Spotfin Shiner	<i>Cyprinella spiloptera</i>	X		
Stargazing Minnow	<i>Phenacobius uranops</i>	X		
Steelcolor Shiner	<i>Cyprinella whipplei</i>	X		
Striped Shiner	<i>Luxilus chrysocephalus</i>	X		SC-NC
Telescope Shiner	<i>Notropis telescopus</i>	X		
Tennessee Dace	<i>Chrosomus tennesseensis</i>	X		D-TN
Tennessee Shiner	<i>Notropis leuciodus</i>	X		
Warpaint Shiner	<i>Luxilus coccogenis</i>	X		
Western Blacknose Dace	<i>Rhinichthys obtusus</i>	X		
Whitetail Shiner	<i>Cyprinella galactura</i>	X		
Yellowfin Shiner	<i>Notropis lutipinnis</i>		X	

Suckers (Catostomidae)

In contrast to their undeserved reputation as “trash” fish, suckers prefer clean, unpolluted waters and some species are often found with trout. Suckers are bottom feeding specialists, adapted to feed by “vacuuming up” invertebrates and clams on river bottoms with their ventral mouths and large lips. Suckers are mostly solitary, sedentary fish, strongly oriented to a bottom existence.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Black Buffalo	<i>Ictiobus niger</i>	X		
Black Redhorse	<i>Moxostoma duquesnei</i>	X		
Blue Sucker	<i>Cycleptus elongates (ext)</i>	X		
Golden Redhorse	<i>Moxostoma erythrurum</i>	X		
Highfin Carpsucker	<i>Carpiodes velifer (ext)</i>	X		
Northern Hogsucker	<i>Hypentelium nigricans</i>	X		
Quillback	<i>Carpiodes cyprinus</i>	X		
River Carpsucker	<i>Carpiodes carpio</i>	X		
River Redhorse	<i>Moxostoma carinatum</i>	X		
Sicklefin Redhorse	<i>Moxostoma sp.</i>	X		C-Fed, T-NC
Silver Redhorse	<i>Moxostoma anisurum</i>	X		
Smallmouth Buffalo	<i>Ictiobus bubalus</i>	X		
Smallmouth Redhorse	<i>Moxostoma breviceps</i>	X		SR-NC
Spotted Sucker	<i>Minytrema melanops</i>	X		
White Sucker	<i>Catostomus commersoni</i>	X		

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Catfish (Ictaluridae)

All catfish are bottom-dwelling fish with flattened heads, barbels (whiskers), no scales, and mildly poisonous dorsal and pectoral spines. The spines don't inject toxin, rather glands at the base of the spines secrete a toxin that can run into a puncture wound. The "whiskers" (barbels) of catfish do not sting -they are harmless sensory organs for smell. Small madtom catfish grow to only 1.5 to 6 inches long while flathead and blue catfish grow up to 5 feet long.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Black Bullhead	<i>Ameiurus melas</i>	X		
Blue Catfish	<i>Ictalurus furcatus</i>			
Channel Catfish	<i>Ictalurus punctatus</i>	X	X*	
Flat Bullhead	<i>Ameiurus platycephalus</i>		X	
Flathead Catfish	<i>Pylodictis olivaris</i>	X		
Mountain Madtom	<i>Noturus eleutherus</i>	X		
Smoky Madtom	<i>Noturus baileyi</i>	X		E-Fed, E-TN
Stonecat	<i>Noturus flavus</i>	X		E-NC
Yellow Bullhead	<i>Ameiurus natalis</i>	X		
Yellowfin Madtom	<i>Noturus flavipinnis</i>	X		T-Fed, E-TN

Salmon and Trout (Salmonidae)

Trout inhabit coldwater streams and cold, clear lakes across the nation. Brook trout is a native Eastern species, whereas rainbow trout, cutthroat trout, and bull trout are all native Western species. The brown trout is a European import. All salmonids have soft fin rays, a second back fin behind the dorsal fin, and fine, smooth scales.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Brook Trout	<i>Salvelinus fontinalis</i>	X	X*	
Brown Trout	<i>Salmo trutta</i>		X	
Lake Trout	<i>Salvelinus namaycush</i>		x	
Rainbow Trout	<i>Oncorhynchus mykiss</i>		X	

Pike (Esocidae)

Pikes are large, voracious predatory fish with long streamlined bodies and long, toothed duckbill-like snouts. Juveniles begin eating fish at about 2 inches in length and continue to be day-active carnivores, eating fish, frogs, waterfowl, and small mammals throughout their solitary lives. Trophy-size musky and pike are actively sought by sport anglers because they strike and fight hard.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Muskellunge	<i>Esox masquinongy</i>	X	X*	

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Silversides (Atherinopsidae)

Of the 160 species of these small, slender, large-eyed fish, only three are found in the freshwaters of North America – most are marine species. These small stream fishes can be important prey fish for reservoir sport fishes.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Brook Silverside	<i>Labidesthes sicculus</i>	X		

Topminnows and killfishes (Fundulidae)

These are small, often brightly-colored fishes with a flattened head and back, upturned mouth, large eyes, and one back fin located far back on the body. As their name implies, topminnows spend most of their lives swimming at or near the water surface. Some of these schooling species are readily caught by nets and used as fish bait by anglers. Some species are important for mosquito control and are favored by aquarium owners.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Northern Studfish	<i>Fundulus catenatus</i>	X		
Blackstripe Topminnow	<i>Fundulus notatus</i>	X		

Toothcarp (Poeciliidae)

Native to the Americas and Africa, the American species are known for bearing their young live, a trait rare among fishes. Many species are common in the aquarium trade, and due to the release of aquarium specimens and the use of some species for mosquito control, these fish are now found well beyond their native range, and have been directly implicated in the disappearance of many populations of native aquatic life.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Eastern Mosquitofish	<i>Gambusia holbrooki</i>		X	
Western Mosquitofish	<i>Gambusia affinis</i>		X	

Sculpin (Cottidae)

Sculpins are flattened, bottom-dwelling fish with large broad head and mouth, and fan-like pectoral fins. Most are marine, but a few live in freshwater. These small stream fishes add to the aquatic diversity and serve as links in the food chain and indicators of water quality. They live primarily on river bottoms and feed on benthic invertebrates and smaller fish.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Banded Sculpin	<i>Cottus carolinae</i>	X		
Mottled Sculpin	<i>Cottus bairdi</i>	X		

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Temperate bass (Moronidae)

Four freshwater species, including the striped, white, and yellow bass, and the white perch (not a true perch) are found in this family. As in the perch family, these species have two dorsal fins - the first with spines and the second with soft rays. Most freshwater populations must be maintained by stocking. Adult striped bass are voracious predators, preferring herring, shad, and alewife prey.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Striped Bass	<i>Morone saxatilis</i>	X	X	
White Bass	<i>Morone chrysops</i>	X		
Yellow Bass	<i>Morone mississippiensis</i>	X		

Sunfishes (Centrarchidae)

Bass and sunfish have two dorsal (top) fins that may appear as one, but the front dorsal fin has hard spines and the second dorsal fin has soft rays. Sunfish feed on plankton, bottom invertebrates, and small fish. Bass quickly become voracious fish eaters. Both sunfish and bass form loose schools around underwater structures.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Black Crappie	<i>Pomoxis nigromaculatus</i>	X		
Bluegill	<i>Lepomis macrochirus</i>	X	X	
Green Sunfish	<i>Lepomis cyanellus</i>	X		
Largemouth Bass	<i>Micropterus salmoides</i>	X		
Longear Sunfish	<i>Lepomis megalotis</i>	X		
Redbreast Sunfish	<i>Lepomis auritus</i>	X	X	
Redear Sunfish	<i>Lepomis microlophus</i>	X		
Rock Bass	<i>Ambloplites rupestris</i>	X		
Smallmouth Bass	<i>Micropterus dolomieu</i>	X		
Spotted Bass	<i>Micropterus punctulatus</i>	X		
Warmouth	<i>Lepomis gulosus</i>	X		
White Crappie	<i>Pomoxis annularis</i>	X		

Perch (Percidae)

These fish tend to rest, or perch, on the bottom using their pelvic fins. They have two top, or dorsal, fins - the first has hard spines, the second soft rays. Yellow perch, walleye, and sauger are major sport fish. This family includes many darters – small, colorful fish in streams throughout the country. Male darters, especially in the breeding season, are as colorful as tropical reef fishes. Darters are very specialized, live in a variety of habitats, and are known for their diversity and beauty.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Ashy Darter	<i>Etheostoma cinereum (ext)</i>	X		
Banded Darter	<i>Etheostoma zonale</i>	X		
Blotchside Logperch	<i>Percina burtoni</i>	X		

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Bluebreast Darter	<i>Etheostoma camurum (ext)</i>	X		
Blueside Darter	<i>Etheostoma jessiae</i>	X		
Channel Darter	<i>Percina copelandi (ext)</i>	X		
Citico Darter	<i>Etheostoma sitikuense</i>	X		E-Fed, E-TN
Dusky Darter	<i>Percina sciera</i>	X		
Fantail Darter	<i>Etheostoma flabellare</i>	X		
Gilt Darter	<i>Percina evides</i>	X		
Greenfin Darter	<i>Etheostoma chlorobranchium</i>	X		T-GA
Greenside Darter	<i>Etheostoma blennioides</i>	X		
Logperch	<i>Percina caprodes</i>	X		
Olive Darter	<i>Percina squamata</i>	X		SC-NC, E-GA
Redline Darter	<i>Etheostoma rufilineatum</i>	X		
River Darter	<i>Percina shumardi</i>	X		
Sauger	<i>Sander canadense</i>	X		
Sickle Darter	<i>Percina williamsi (ext)</i>	X		
Snail Darter	<i>Percina tanasi</i>	X		T- Fed
Stripetail Darter	<i>Etheostoma kennicotti</i>	X		
Tangerine Darter	<i>Percina aurantiaca</i>	X		D-TN
Tennessee (Snubnose) Darter	<i>Etheostoma tennesseense (= simoterum)¹</i>	X		
Tuckasegee Darter	<i>Etheostoma gutselli</i>	X		E-TN, SC-GA
Walleye	<i>Sander vitreum</i>		X	
Wounded Darter	<i>Etheostoma vulneratum</i>	X		SC-NC
Yellow Perch	<i>Perca flavescens</i>		X	

Drums (Sciaenidae)

A family that includes drums and croakers, the family is probably best known for species which produce drumming sounds by contracting muscles against their swim bladder. They're found worldwide, in both salt and freshwater, and are typically bottom dwellers.

Common name	Scientific name	Native	Non-native	Conservation status
Freshwater Drum	<i>Aplodinotus grunniens</i>	X		

Special thanks to Virginia Tech for providing family descriptions:

Ney, John J., Louis A. Helfrich. *Sustaining America's Aquatic Biodiversity Selected Freshwater Fish Families*. Blacksburg: Virginia Cooperative Extension. Publication 420-526.

¹ Currently debated whether the Tennessee Darter (*Etheostoma tennesseense*) is a distinct species, or a subspecies of the Snubnose Darter (*Etheostoma simoterum*).

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