



Green Sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*)

Young anglers love to catch a green sunfish because it has a large mouth with which to take an angler's bait. Its mouth is so big it extends below the middle of its eye. Although a green sunfish rarely grows very big, it is fun to catch.

A feature of green sunfish is its short, rounded fins. Its pectoral fins are so short that they do not reach the fish's nostrils when they are bent forward.* Its tail is rounded as well. The edges of the pelvic, anal, soft dorsal and tail fins are white to orange. These fins are brighter in color during breeding.* A green sunfish's body is brownish green with rows of small, metallic blue body spots and cheek lines. Black spots can be found on the base of the anal and soft dorsal fins.*

A green sunfish is often found in "marginal habitat," habitat where most fish cannot live. It can tolerate low oxygen, and is one of the first types of fish to move into streams that have filled after being dry in the late summer. A green sunfish is a "generalist," feeding on a variety of prey. Green sunfish can become too numerous, which causes fish not to grow as quickly as they normally would. Regulated ethical fishing is an important tool for managing some fish populations in Alabama.

***Vocabulary**

Anal fin – a single fin on the bottom of a fish behind the anus.

Breeding – ready to reproduce.

Fin – a visible body part used in swimming or steering that is not supported by solid bone.

Pectoral fins – a pair of side fins behind the head.

Pelvic fins – a pair of side fins on the bottom of a fish.

Soft dorsal fin – the fins on top of a fish that are not spiny.