

BOWFIN

(*Amia calva*)

Oneida Lake Status:
Common

- One of New York's living dinosaurs
- Common in Oneida Lake
- Live in shallow, weedy habitats

With its large size and distinct appearance, bowfins are unlikely to be confused with other Oneida Lake species. Bowfins have a dark olive green to brown back, and a pale yellow belly. They have large round heads with heavy plates on the cheeks, and a large mouth loaded with pointed teeth. Bowfin fins are often a bright green color (males may have orange highlights), and their tails are rounded with an oval black spot at the base (see drawing below). In Oneida Lake, a bowfin may grow to 27 inches in length, and weigh 5 pounds.

Bowfin are limited in New York State, and Oneida Lake is one of the few places they occur. They prefer shallow, weedy habitats, and have adapted to live in low oxygen conditions. In Oneida Lake, bowfin feed heavily on fish and crayfish, but also will eat leeches, insects, and frogs.

Bowfin have been in New York State for the last 60 million years, and are considered one of this state's "living dinosaurs". Despite this, they are relatively unknown compared to other local fish of this size. Bowfin put up a good fight when hooked, but are rarely sought by Oneida Lake anglers.



Bowfin in the wild



*Oneida Lake bowfin angling is rare:
<http://www.thejump.net/id/bowfin.jpg>*



Bowfin line drawing



*Close-up of a Bowfin's distinct head:
www.glooskapandthefrog.org/bowfin%20eye.jpg*

Prepared by:

Alexander Sonneborn
Cornell Biological Field Station

January 2007