

GREEN SUNFISH (*Lepomis cyanellus*)

**Oneida Lake Status:
Not Common**

- Oneida Lake population small but on the rise
- Out competes bluegills in Oneida Lake
- Hybridization makes identification difficult

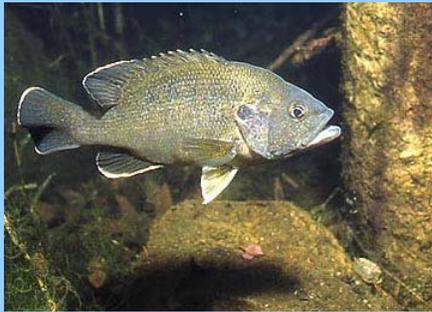
Green sunfish may grow to 9 inches in Oneida Lake, and weigh up to a ½ pound. Green sunfish are not as deep bodied as other commonly known sunfish, and typically have a more drab color scheme. They have a blue-green back that fades to yellow or white at the belly, and have a black earflap with a yellow edge (see drawing). Green sunfish have a top jaw that extends back to the middle of the eye, and a mouth that is larger than its close relatives. Unfortunately, green sunfish may hybridize with pumpkinseed and bluegill sunfish (see photo to left), making identification difficult.



Small green sunfish before release back to the water:
http://www.tnfish.org/PhotoGalleryFish_TWRA/FishPhotoGallery_TWRA/pages/GreenSunfishMeltonHillNegus_jpg.htm

Green sunfish do not favor any bottom type in Oneida Lake, but generally live near brush, vegetation, and rocks. Unlike most sunfish, greens tolerate areas with high turbidity and low dissolved oxygen. In Oneida, green sunfish eat small fish, aquatic insects, and other invertebrates, and their large mouths allow them to eat larger prey than other sunfish can.

Green sunfish are found in Oneida Lake and throughout New York State. While it is possible that they are native to Oneida, green sunfish are an invasive exotic in many places and often out-compete the native bluegill. Their aggressive behavior makes them an easy, fun fish to catch.



Green sunfish in the wild:

http://www.bobberstop.com/images/green_sunfish.jpg



Sunfish identification becomes difficult when hybridization occurs:
<http://www.southernpondsandwildlife.com/upload/articletitles/000052.50.jpg>



Line drawing of a green sunfish

Prepared by:

Alexander Sonneborn
Cornell Biological Field Station

January 2007