

PUMPKINSEED

(*Lepomis gibbosus*)

Oneida Lake Status:
Abundant

- Most abundant sunfish in Oneida Lake
- Most colorful freshwater fish in Oneida Lake
- Great fish for young and beginning anglers

Pumpkinseeds are colorful, small to medium sized, freshwater sunfish. In Oneida Lake, they may grow to 12 inches in length, and may weigh as much as 1 pound. They have a bronze to red-orange belly, and have irregular, wavy, interconnecting blue-green lines over a golden brown to olive background. Pumpkinseeds can be distinguished by a bright scarlet spot on the rear portion of the gill flap (see drawing), and by wavy, emerald or blue streaks on the side of the head.



An Oneida Lake pumpkinseed being measured by researchers

Pumpkinseeds are the most abundant sunfish species in Oneida Lake. While they can be found throughout Oneida, they prefer the warmer, shallow, weedy bays around the lake. Here, they eat a variety of prey including insects, caddisfly larvae, zebra mussels, snails, and amphipods.

Pumpkinseed sunfish are one of the most easily caught freshwater species, readily biting small pieces of bait. This makes them a great fish for beginning or young anglers, and on Oneida Lake, Big Bay is a popular place to catch them. They are strong fighters and have small, but sweet-tasting fillets. Pumpkinseeds provide good sport when other fish are not biting, and are commonly seen on fishing lines around Oneida Lake.



A pumpkinseed in its habitat:

<http://www.exciton.cs.rice.edu/faculty/wong/swgallery/aquarium/pmkseed.jpg>



Pumpkinseeds are great fun for young anglers: <http://www.foxlakeresort.com/images/pumpkinseed.jpg>



Line drawing showing the pumpkinseed's coloration

Prepared by:

Alexander Sonneborn
Cornell Biological Field Station

January 2007