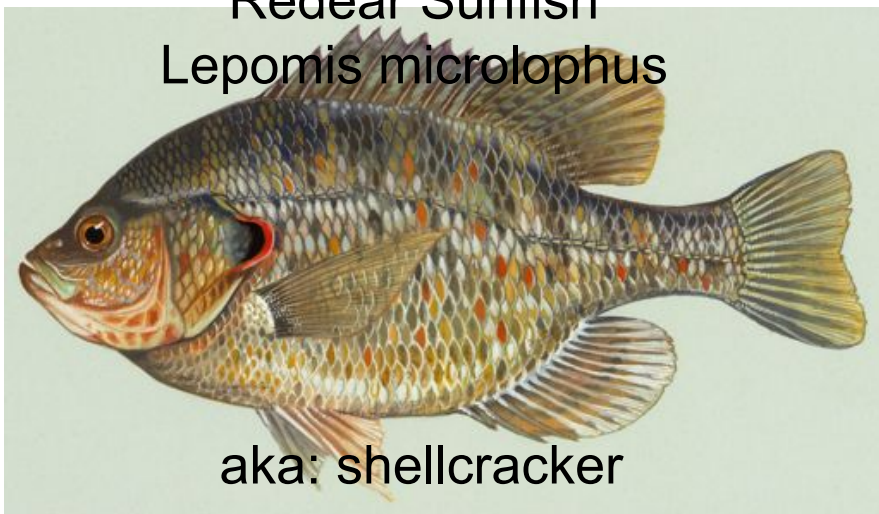


# Redear Sunfish Lepomis microlophus



aka: shellcracker

by Angela Perry

## taxonomy

- Class: actinopterygii
- Order: perciformes
- Family: centrarchidae
- Genus : lepomis
- Species: microlophus

## Identification



- Short opercular flap
- Deep compressed body
- Large eyes
- Pectoral fin long and pointed
- Yellow-orange belly
- Small terminal mouth
- Black opercular spot with red on the edge (in males, orange in females)
- The first dorsal fin has 9 - 11 spines
- The anal fin has three spines

## Identification (cont.)

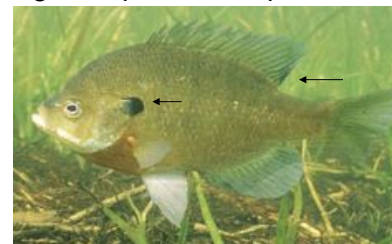


No spots on dorsal fin, back edge of opercular flap red →

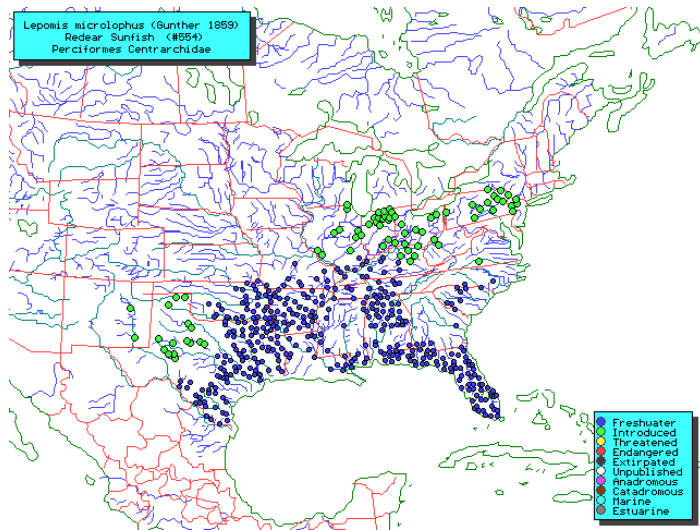
← Rows of small brown spots on dorsal fin. Sharp-edged red crescent in lower rear corner of opercular flap (pumpkinseed)



← No red on opercular flap, black blotches in posterior corner of dorsal fin (bluegill)



## distribution



## Life history

**Habitat:** fresh water ponds, swamps, lakes, vegetated pools with muddy or sandy bottoms (warm water with little to no current)

**Diet:** feed during the day on freshwater mussels, snails, worms, shrimp, insects and grubs.

**Average length for adult fish** 130- 240 mm.

(weigh about 1 pound)

**Max age is 8 years old**



## Life history (cont.)

- Mature at age one or two
- Spawn in shallow sandy ponds in the spring from April to June when the water is between 68° and 75° F
- Males create colonies of nests
- Females lay eggs in several different nests.
- Each female produces 15,000- 30,000 eggs per year
- Males guard nests for several days
- Eggs hatch in 2-4 days
- Young Redear sunfish shoal together with other sunfish and bluegill until adulthood.

## Ecological Importance

- Game fish
- taste good fried

