

female may deposit eggs in batches over a several-week period. The long spawning season assures that there will be offspring even if adverse conditions occur during some parts of it.

The bluegill does have some desirable qualities: It is easily caught, is a good scrapper on light tackle, and is tasty. It's ideal where you want fast action for kids.

Hybrid Sunfish

Hybrid sunfish are artificial crosses usually between green sunfish females and males of other species like the bluegill or redear sunfish. If the fish farmer producing the hybrid sunfish was very careful in selecting the parents so that only female green sunfish and only males of the other species are present in the breeding pond, the resulting offspring could range from 65 to nearly 100 percent males. Since most hybrid sunfish are male, reproduction may be reduced in ponds that contain only hybrids. Under these conditions, the hybrid sunfish may also grow faster than normal bluegill sunfish. However, hybrid sunfish should not be stocked under the following conditions:

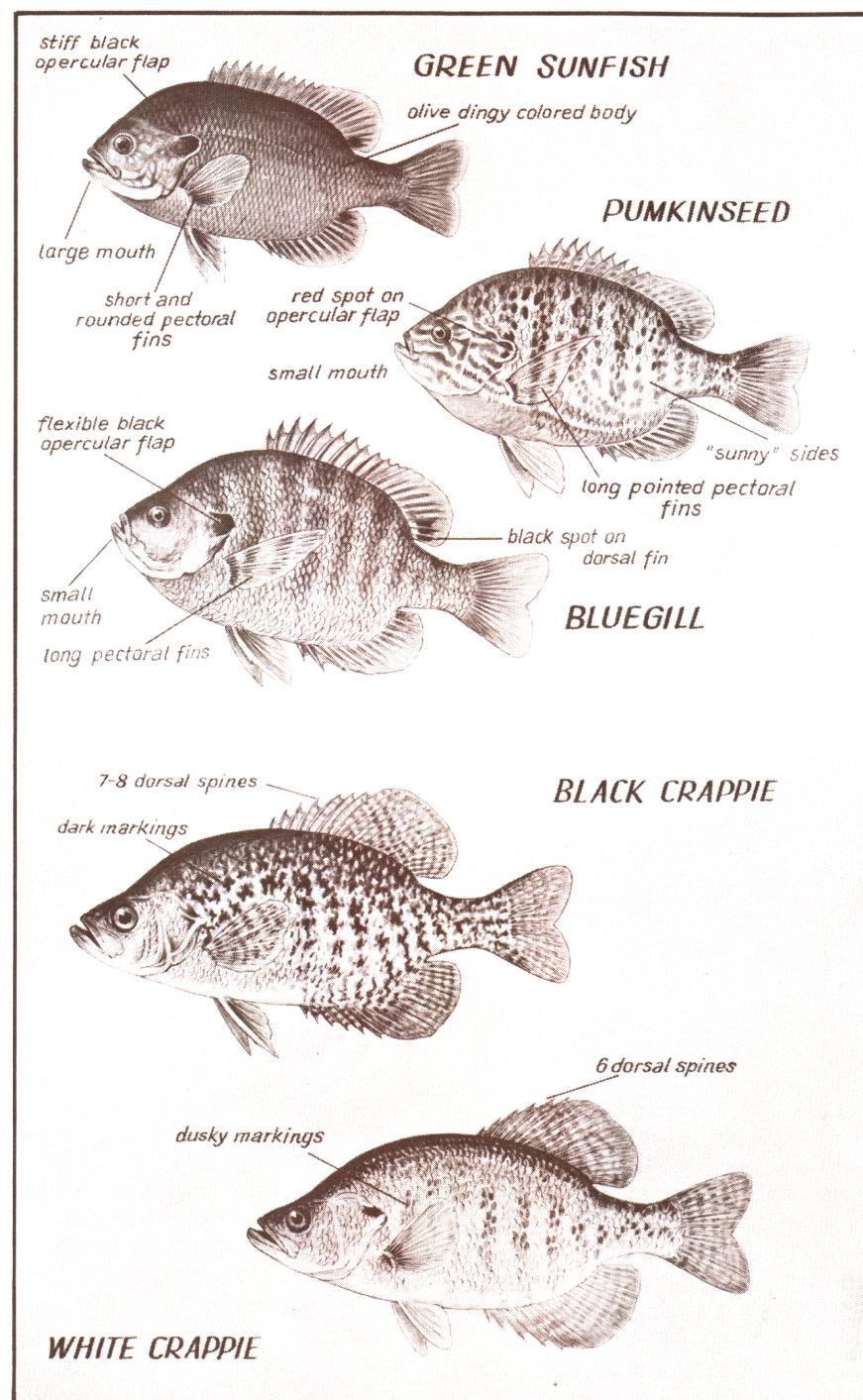
- If normal green sunfish or bluegills are already in the pond; the hybrids can backcross with their parent types since the hybrids are fertile.

- If ponds already have a stunted sunfish population; they will compete for the same food and will not grow faster, they will also be able to breed with the stunted sunfish.

- If the pond is shallow and weedy; the weeds will provide places for the offspring of the hybrid sunfish to avoid predation. Overpopulation will only be forestalled by a few years.

Channel Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*)

Catfish stocking in Michigan ponds has increased, owing to their greater availability since extensive southern catfish farming developed in the 1960's. But the catfish has certain drawbacks in ponds of northern states. They do not generally spawn successfully in ponds unless special spawning structures are installed. Also, their growth in Michigan is slow compared to growth in the South. The catfish is a truly



Panfishes — these generally are unsatisfactory in Michigan ponds.

warmwater fish which grows fastest in water over 80°F (27°C). In fact, catfish farming is possible only in southern states or where the water exceeds 70°F (21°C) for at least 4 months each year.

Nevertheless, catfish gradually grow large enough to provide recreational fishing in many southern Michigan ponds. They normally

reach 12 inches (30 cm) after 3-4 years.

Catfish eat many types of food, both living and dead: insect larvae, crayfish, snails, worms, clams, fish and various items which fall into the pond.

Females usually mature at 13-16 inches (32-40 cm) in length. They spawn in a cavity such as beneath