

WILDLIFE PROFILES

Wyoming has a number of different kinds of fish. Some are natives, others have been brought to Wyoming from other states by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department and released in our waters. Some fish prefer to live in lakes, and

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others seem to like streams. Many fish can live in either one, as long as the water is clean and there is good habitat. Below are four native Wyoming fish.

SUCKERS

Suckers are strange looking fish. Their small, tube-like mouths are down where their chins should be. Suckers swim on the bottoms of lakes and streams poking around for food in the mud and rocks. Not having a mouth full of big, sharp teeth, a sucker can't prey on other fish or frogs. Several different kinds of suckers are native Wyoming fish. Some of them can grow to several pounds. Anglers often hook suckers while trying to catch other fish. Most people do not like to eat suckers, but the smaller kinds are important food for large trout and other game fish.

LING

The ling, or burbot, is a Wyoming fish that looks like it belongs in the ocean. Its long, narrow body gives it an eel-like look. The ling's head is flattened, and a barbel, or whisker like catfish have, grows from its chin. Ling are predators. They eat other fish and do most of their hunting at night. Ling prefer very cold water. They live in the northern states and in Canada where they haunt the deepest parts of lakes. Ling also live in big rivers. Clean water is very important to them. They begin to die if their water gets muddy and polluted. Can you find where they live in Wyoming?

CUTTHROAT TROUT

The cutthroat trout gets its name from the bright red stripes under its jaw.

Wyoming has four kinds of cutthroat trout. They live in different parts of the state. These trout are very popular with anglers and are easier to catch than some of the other kinds of trout. Cutthroats will bite on bait, lures or artificial flies. Cutthroats are the only kind of trout native to Wyoming. Sometimes cutthroat trout and rainbow trout cross breed and lay eggs. After hatching, the young trout look a bit like cutthroats and a bit like rainbows—they are called cuttbows.

SHOVELNOSE STURGEON

Unlike many animals, sturgeons have not changed much over time. Sturgeon fossils from millions of years ago look much like today's sturgeons. The shovelnose sturgeon, a river fish, is becoming rare in Wyoming. Like the sucker, it has a small, weak, toothless mouth made for feeding on small water creatures it finds on sandy stream bottoms. It also has long, finger-like barbels on its mouth to help it find food. The shovelnose disappeared from some Wyoming rivers during the 20th century, but it still lives in the Powder River of northern Wyoming. Sturgeons migrate downstream hundreds of miles.