

BLUEGILL

(*Lepomis macrochirus*)

Oneida Lake Status:
Common

- Great Oneida Lake fish for beginners
- Found in most weedy habitats of Oneida Lake
- May be confused with pumpkinseeds

Bluegill are in the sunfish family, and are sometimes confused with the closely related pumpkinseed sunfish. Bluegills have a green to brown back that fades on their sides into brown, orange, or pink. Near the belly, they have vertical bars that may stand out, and they have a breast that is a bright yellow to copper-orange in color (see line drawing). The sides of the head have hints of metallic blue and green (see photos), and a large, square-shaped, blue-black gill flap and an obvious dark blotch at the back of the dorsal fin helps to distinguish this fish.

Bluegills live in slow moving or standing water where there is plenty of vegetation (see photo at right). In Oneida Lake, they are found in most shallow water near the shore, and are frequently found in areas with pumpkinseeds. Here they eat amphipods, scuds, zooplankton, and insects. However, unlike other sunfish, bluegill will also supplement its diet with plant material when food is scarce.

When hooked, bluegill fight hard and provide great sport for anglers. Combined with the ease of catching them, their sport fish quality has led to bluegill stockings in many parts of the country. Bluegill are not considered a sport fish because of their small size, and they are less sought after in Oneida Lake than other species. Despite this, the bluegill is a great fish for less serious anglers, and remains a great fish for beginners.



Bluegill in the wild



*Bluegill are fun for anglers of all ages:
http://www.jeffsundin.com/bluegill91505_SharonKarels.jpg*



Line drawing showing bluegill coloration and patterns



Bluegill being measured by local Cornell University researchers

Prepared by:

Alexander Sonneborn
Cornell Biological Field Station

January 2007