# hornyhead chub

*Nocomis biguttatus*

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| Kingdom: | Animalia |
| Division/Phylum: | Chordata - vertebrates |
| Class: | Osteichthyes |
| Order: | Cypriniformes |
| Family: | Cyprinidae |

## Features

The hornyhead chub may grow to 10 inches long, but the average size is five to seven inches. It has a dark spot behind each eye. The body is olive to brown on the back, brownish-yellow on the sides, and white to yellow on the belly. It has a yellow stripe along the back, a black spot on the tail, and yellow to orange fins. A rounded snout, teeth in the throat, and small eyes also are characteristic. It has a small barbel (whisker-like projection) at each corner of the mouth. The large scales have dark edges which give the fish a cross-hatch appearance. Breeding males have a red spot behind the eye, orange colored dorsal and anal fins, and white bumps (tubercles) on the pinkish-bluish head.

## Natural History

The hornyhead chub lives in rocky creeks and rivers with permanent, clear water and gravel bottoms. A few have been collected in the natural lakes. It eats both plant and animal material. It lives in schools with other species. It reaches maturity at two or three years of age. Spawning occurs during April and May. The male carries large rocks in his mouth several feet to construct stone nests. The male starts the process by fanning out a depression on the bottom. Eggs may then be deposited and covered with stones. The female deposits over 1,000 eggs that stick to the stones. Other species also may deposit their eggs in the nest. Nest building and egg deposition continue until the nest is one to three feet across and several inches high. Predators often are found nearby as the eggs begin to hatch. The hornyhead chub has an average life span of three to four years.

## Habitats

interior rivers and streams; natural lakes and prairie marshes

## Iowa Status

common; native

## Iowa Range

eastern three-fourths of Iowa

## Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001. *Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats* CD-ROM.