warmouth

Chaenobryttus gulosus

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Chordata - vertebrates
Class:	Osteichthyes
Family:	Perciformes
Order:	Centrarchidae

Features

The warmouth has a heavy body and a large mouth, with the upper jaw reaching the middle of the eye or beyond. The average length of this sunfish is six to eight inches. Teeth are present on the tongue. Dark lines may be seen on the body behind the red eye. The presence of three anal spines helps to distinguish this species from the similar rock bass, which has six anal spines. Its back and sides are greenish-brown with dark blotches, while the belly is light yellow. The fins have dark brown spots and bands. The flap on the gill cover of breeding males is edged with red and the pelvic and anal fins are outlined in white.

Natural History

The warmouth lives in lakes and ponds with clear water, little or no current, and plenty of plants. It rarely is found in river lakes, overflow ponds, or oxbows. It eats crayfish, insects, fish, and aquatic sowbugs. Spawning occurs May through August. The male fans a nest on the bottom into which the female deposits eggs. Eggs hatch in a little over a day. The male remains with the nest from the time of egg deposition through when the young leave it, several days later.

Habitats

constructed lakes, ponds, and reservoirs; Mississippi River

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

eastern edge and southern half of Iowa

Bibliography

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