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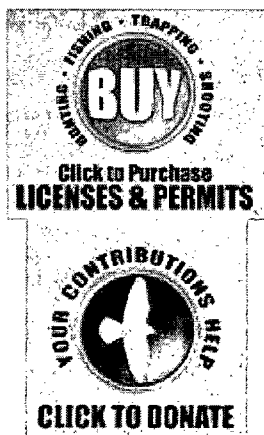


Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife

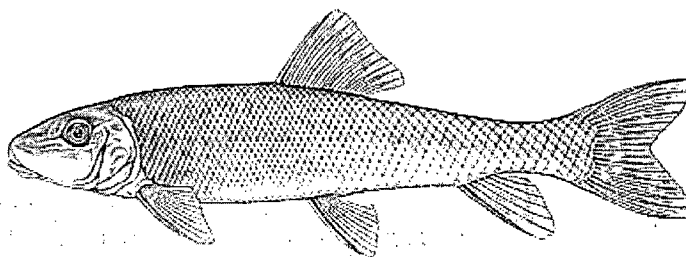


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Life History Notes: WHITE SUCKER



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COMMON NAMES: White sucker, Gray sucker, Mullet, Brook sucker

SCIENTIFIC NAME: *Catostomus commersoni*

IDENTIFICATION: White suckers have a long slender body with silvery colored sides and a white belly. The mouth points down, allowing the fish to suck food from the bottom. The head is rounded between the eyes.

RANGE AND HABITAT: The white sucker is native to Ohio and can be found in every county in the state. Plus, it can be found in Lake Erie and its adjoining bays. White suckers can be found in small and large streams, ponds, lakes, and reservoirs. They prefer deeper water in the late fall and winter months but move into shallow water in lakes and riffle areas in streams. The white sucker can withstand a wide variety of conditions including turbidity, and low oxygen levels.

LIFE HISTORY: White suckers spawn from April to early May when they run upstream, usually starting at night. They seek areas with swift water and a gravel substrate to randomly spread their eggs. Females can lay between 20,000 to 50,000 eggs. The young hatch and remain in the gravel for one to two weeks before migrating downstream at night. Larval white suckers feed on protozoans, diatoms, and small crustaceans. As the young grow, the mouth moves to the ventral side of the fish and allows the fish to feed on the bottom. Adults are bottom fish and eat mud, plants, mollusks, insects, diatoms, crustaceans, and protozoans. Both adult and juvenile white suckers feed during the day and night.

ADULT SIZE: The average size white sucker runs from 6 ounces to 2 pounds. White suckers of 5 pounds are rare.

FISHING METHODS: The best time to fish for white suckers is March and April when they are on their spawning grounds. The best fishing methods are worms on a small hook. Casting rods, fly rods, cane poles, and even throw lines can be used. No sinker should be used and the bait should be allowed to drift naturally over riffle areas.

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