

KEY TO SOME OF THE FRESHWATER FISH FAMILIES OF THE UNITED STATES

Images modified from: McPhail, R.D., and J. Carveth. 1993. *Field key to the freshwater fishes of British Columbia*. and Scott, W.B., and E.J. Crossman. 1973. *Freshwater fishes of Canada*. Fish. Res. Bd. Can. Bull. 184.

Eel-like body shape (2 families)

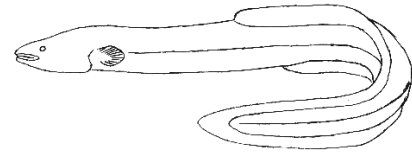
Lacking jaws; no paired pectoral fins; pores alongside head in place of gill cover

Lamprey (Family Petromyzontidae; 18 species in family)



Has obvious jaws; pectoral fins present; gill cover rather than pores alongside head

American eel (Family Anguillidae; 1 species in family)



Typical fish body shape (many families)

One fin on back (5 families)

Dorsal fin set back on body; front edge of fin behind mid-point of body length

Bony scutes on back; upper lobe caudal fin much longer than lower; short barbels hanging down in front of mouth

Sturgeon (Family Acipenseridae; 8 species in family)



No bony scutes on back; upper lobe caudal fin same size as lower; flattened profile to upper jaw

Pike (Family Esocidae; 4 species in family)

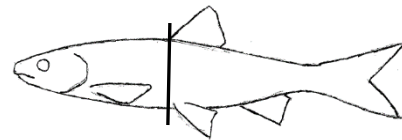


Dorsal fin set at midpoint on back on body;

Front of dorsal fin in line with or behind front of pelvic fins; terminal mouth

Dorsal fin base approximately same length as anal fin base; body streamlined, not over-deepened

Minnnows (Families Cyprinidae and Leuciscidae; ~270 species in the families)



Dorsal fin base shorter than anal fin base; body deep; large downturned mouth; belly with saw-tooth scales

Herring (Family Clupeidae; 8 species in family)



Front of dorsal fin ahead of front of pelvic fins; sub-terminal mouth

Suckers (Family Catostomidae; ~65 species in family)



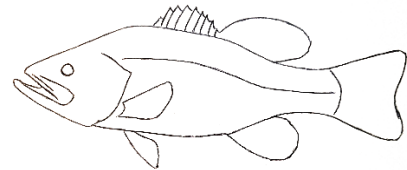
Two fins on back (4 families)

Both fins approximately the same size

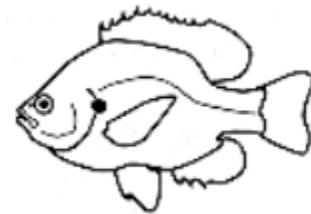
Fins may be joined or separate; may be spiny or soft-rayed.

Sunfish and basses (Family Centrarchidae; ~40 species in family)

Two clearly separate fins; front fin spiny rayed; rear fin soft rayed (basses)



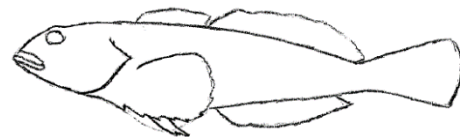
Two fins joined together as one; front half spiny rayed; rear half soft rayed (sunfishes)



Front fin considerably smaller than second fin

Eyes near top of head; very large pectoral fins; anal fin base as long as second dorsal fin base

Sculpins (Family Cottidae; ~35 species in family)



Rear fin smaller than front fin (rear fin is “adipose” fin)

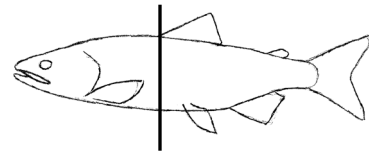
Deep body; long anal fin base, much longer than dorsal fin base; barbels around mouth; spines on dorsal and pectoral fins; front of dorsal fin above rear of pectoral fin.

Catfishes (Family Ictaluridae; ~45 species in family)



No barbels, anal fin base approximately same length as dorsal fin base; no spines on any fins; front of dorsal fin behind rear of pectoral fin.

Salmon & trout (Family Salmonidae; 34 species in family)



Multiple spines on back (1 family)

From three to nine spines ahead of dorsal fin; small fish

Sticklebacks (Family Gasterosteidae; 4 species in family)

