



**Fish of
Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge
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Fish of Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge

One of the most overlooked groups of animals on the refuge is the many species of fish which inhabit the area year round. Normally visitors don't have a chance to see these interesting animals unless they are with a school group. However, the fish found at Bombay Hook play a very important role to many other species.

The brackish (mixture of fresh and salt water) pool located next to the boardwalk trail is the home of several species of killifish. This group of fish is small in size, normally not larger than 5 inches. The most common species observed are mummichogs, banded killifish, and sheepshead minnow. During the winter months they tend to stay in the deeper areas, sometimes buried in the mud. Another small fish occasionally found is the eastern mosquitofish. Both the mosquitofish and killifish play an important role for visitors at the refuge, their main source of food being mosquito larvae! Another important value is they are a major food source for wading birds (egrets) and raccoons. You can usually see these fish in large schools when crossing the small bridge on the trail.

Finis Pool, a freshwater impoundment, offers another very interesting fish species, the eastern mudminnow. Reaching a whopping 4 inches, the mudminnow is capable of surviving in waters with very little oxygen for long periods of time by burying itself in mud for several weeks if needed. They are omnivorous and will jump out of the water to catch insects sitting on plant leaves. Killifish and occasional sunfish can also be found in this area, especially near the water-control structure by the turn-around.

For those friends who didn't know, the pond at the corner of Finis Road and the road leading to the Allee House is a naturally self-contained freshwater pond which is the home of pumpkin seed (sunfish) and brown bullhead catfish. The abundance of fish make this pond a very good spot to observe herons, egrets, and the occasional belted kingfisher feeding. Fish eggs attached to the legs of wading birds is the most likely way the recent fish population was established in the pond. With the installation of a floating dock, observation of these beautifully colored fish is now even easier.

The salt marsh is home to many species of fish. Many fish such as striped bass (rockfish) use the marshes as a nursery for young fish. The fish found in these waters serve as an important food source for many birds. Egrets and herons along with some of the diving ducks like mergansers feed on small fish. These include killifish, Atlantic silversides, threespine sticklebacks, and juvenile white perch and striped bass. Adult striped bass, white perch and gizzard shad are important for our nesting bald eagles and their young, ospreys, raccoons and river otters.

Although recreational fishing access from the refuge itself is prohibited, visitors can still enjoy "fish watching" and "bird watching" together. If you're interested in learning more about the fish of Delaware, you can purchase a copy of *Delaware's Freshwater and Brackish Water Fishes: A Popular Account* at the Refuge Store. So next time you come birding don't forget to stop along the trails and look into another world just waiting to be discovered.

Fish List for Bombay Hook National Wildlife Refuge

Freshwater - common name

Pumpkin seed

Bluegill

Bluespotted sunfish

Banded sunfish

Golden shiner

Eastern mudminnow

American eel

Common carp

Brown bullhead

White perch

Scientific Name

Lepomis gibbosus

Lepomis macrochirus

Enneacanthus gloriosus

Enneacanthus obesus

Notemigonus crysolleucas

Umbra pygmaea

Anguilla rostrata

Cyprinus carpio

Ictalurus nebulosus

Morone americana

Brackish / Salt marsh - common name

White perch

Striped bass

American eel

Mummichog

Spotfin killifish

Sheepshead minnow

Atlantic silverside

Eastern mosquitofish

Threespine stickleback

Gizzard shad

Banded killifish

Rainwater killifish

Scientific Name

Morone americana

Morone saxatilis

Anquilla rostrata

Fundulus heteroclitus

Fundulus luciae

Cyprinodon variegatus

Menidia menidia

Gambusia holbrooki

Gasterosteus aculeatus

Dorosoma cepedianum

Fundulus diaphanus

Lucania parva

Fish List for the Delaware Bay

COMMON NAME

SCIENTIFIC NAME

Blueback herring	<i>Alosa aestivalis</i>
Northern Searobin	<i>Prionotus carolinus</i>
Sand shrimp	<i>Crangon vulgaris</i>
Naked Goby	<i>Gobiosoma Boscii</i>
Northern stargazer	<i>Astroscopus guttatus</i>
Northern pipefish	<i>Syngnathus fuscus</i>
Northern sennet	<i>Sphyræna borealis</i>
Mottled sculpin	<i>Cottus bairdi</i>
Three-spined stickleback	<i>Gasterosteus aculeatus</i>
Conger eel	<i>Conger oceanicus</i>
Oyster toadfish	<i>Opsanus tau</i>
Atlantic silverside	<i>Menidia Menidia</i>
Smallmouth flounder	<i>Etropus microstomus</i>
Sculpin	<i>Cottidae family</i>
Porcupinefish	<i>Diodon hystrix</i>
Silver perch	
Bay Anchovy	<i>Anchoa mitchilli</i>
Alewife	<i>Alosa pseudoharengus</i>
Spanish mackerel	<i>Scomberomorus muclatus</i>
Hogchoker	<i>Trinectes maculatus</i>
Windowpane (albino)	<i>Scophthalmus aquosus</i>
Bluefish	<i>Pomatomus saltatrix</i>
Northern kingfish	<i>Menticirrhus saxatilis</i>
Smooth tonguefish	<i>Symphurus pusillus</i>
Striped cusk-eel	<i>Ophidion marginatum</i>
Striped bass	<i>Morone saxatilis</i>

