

I FISH NY Newsletter

September 2010

The Elusive Banded Sunfish

By Heidi O'Riordan

The banded sunfish (*Enneacanthus obesus*) is one of the smaller species of sunfish that are native to New York, growing to a maximum size of only two inches. It can be easily distinguished from our local species of sunfishes (the bluegill sunfish and the pumpkinseed sunfish) by its rounded tail. Both bluegill and pumpkinseed sunfish have forked tails. The banded sunfish is a light greenish beige with hints of purple iridescence and six or seven vertical black bands. It is a coastal plain species that occurs in slow-moving and often darkly stained water where there is abundant submerged vegetation. The banded sunfish is tolerant to high water temperatures, low dissolved oxygen levels and acidic conditions. There is limited information on the life history of the banded sunfish. It is assumed that this fish has similar habits to other sunfishes, with males building and guarding small nests in late spring to early summer. However, banded sunfish build their nests on aquatic vegetation, rather than in the gravel. Adults feed on aquatic insects, as well as other small invertebrates. In New York, the banded sunfish has only been found in the Passaic drainage in Orange and Rockland Counties and on Eastern Long Island in the Peconic drainage (Smith, 1985). The banded sunfish is listed as a threatened species in New York State because of its limited range. It is also listed as a "species of greatest conservation need" (SGCN) in the New York Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS).

The New York CWCS considers the banded sunfish to be vulnerable to environmental catastrophes due to the few occurrences limited to the coastal plain area of eastern Long Island. Therefore, it is listed in New York as threatened. It is recommended by the CWCS to monitor the status of existing populations of the banded sunfish and development a recovery plan.



Photo by John Bunnell

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I FISH NY is a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation education program.



**ASK KATIE Q: I'd like to try trout fishing this fall.
What type of gear do I need? And where
should I go?**

A: The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation trout stocking program provides anglers on Long Island with great trout fishing opportunities. The NYS DEC Region 1 Fisheries Unit stocks nearly 9,000 brown trout in the fall in 20 bodies of water in Nassau and Suffolk Counties.



The most popular trout fishing streams on Long Island, that are open for fishing in the fall include the Nissequogue River in Caleb Smith State Park in Smithtown, and the Connetquot River in Connetquot River State Park in Oakdale. Both of these streams are limited to fly fishing only within the parks with a park use fee. The Carlls River in the Town of Babylon also provides fall trout fishing opportunity from Southards Pond down to Argyle Lake, bait and spinning tackle are allowed in the Carlls River. The tidal portions of the Connetquot River, Nissequogue River, and Carmans River in Shirley, are also stocked with trout in the fall. A Marine Recreational Fishing License is required for fishing in tidal waters. Popular lakes and ponds for trout fishing in Nassau County include, Massapequa Reservoir, Oyster Bay Mill Pond and Upper Twin Pond (Wantagh). In Suffolk County, Southards and Argyle Lakes in Babylon, West Lake in Patchogue, Upper and Lower Lakes in Yaphank and Laurel Lake in Southold are all good choices. For more locations, check out the Trout Stocking lists for Suffolk and Nassau Counties (see links below).

When fishing for trout, use light tackle. A light to medium action spinning rod with 4-8 lb test will do the trick. Trout will go for worms, corn, minnows or Berkley Power Bait. Popular artificial lures include spinners and spoons which are made of metal and imitate bait fish (size 1/32-1/8oz).

When fishing a stream for trout, look for areas with gravel that have cover such as boulders, logs or deep water. When fishing a lake or pond, look for cover such as a weed line.

For information on the trout species of New York, check out <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7016.html>.

For the Suffolk County Trout Stocking List go to <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/23286.html>.

For the Nassau County Trout Stocking List, visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/23311.html>.



artwork by Ann TeNyenhuis

FISHING HOTSPOTS

NYC: Baisley Pond Park, Queens, NY

Type: Freshwater.

Where: North Conduit Avenue at Baisley Blvd S, South Jamaica, Queens

Public Transportation:

Subway and Bus: E/J/Z train to Sutphin Blvd/ Archer Ave, connect to Q6 bus to Sutphin Blvd/Rockaway Blvd. Alternately, A train to Rockaway blvd; transfer to Q7 bus to same intersection. The lake is north of the bus stop.

Car: North Conduit Ave to Baisley blvd. South

Access:

Boat Launch: No

Fishing Pier: No

Shoreline: Yes; most of the shoreline is accessible by foot; some portions are handicapped accessible.

Species:

Largemouth bass

Panfish

Carp

Brown bullhead

Hours: The park is open from dawn until dusk

Other: Like All NYC Parks properties, fishing at Baisley Pond is catch & release only. A fishing license is required for anglers 16 years of age or older.

I Fish NY will be holding a fishing clinic at the lake on Saturday, October 9, from 10am-2pm.

Tips: This park receives relatively little fishing pressure, so there are ample medium to large bass lurking in the lake's vegetation. The best bet is to try a scum frog among the lily pads at the lake's north end, but plastic worms are also work well among the weeds in the summer. Try a spinner or plug in the deep water. Panfish are abundant along most of the shoreline, and the occasional bullhead might be dredged up by fishing the bottom.

Additional Information:

New York DEC Baisley Pond Fishing Info:
<<http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/62986.html>>.

Baisley Pond Park Home Page:
<<http://www.nycgovparks.org/parks/baisleypondpark>>

Fishing License Info:
<<http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/6091.html>>.



FISHING HOTSPOTS

Long Island: Twin Ponds, Centerport, NY

Type: Freshwater Pond

Area: 5 acres

Maximum Depth: 4-5 feet

Owned by the Town of Huntington, Twin Ponds is located in the Betty Allen Nature Preserve in Centerport, NY, on the south side of Rte. 25a. Parking is available across from the nature preserve on the north side of 25a. Trout are stocked in the spring and fall.

Betty Allen was a renowned environmentalist from Centerport, NY. Betty was the founder of the Huntington Audubon Center, and was nicknamed the "Bird Lady of Centerport." Following her death in 1987, the Town of Huntington renamed Twin Ponds, the Betty Allen Nature Preserve to honor her passion for nature.

Access:

Boat Launch: No

Handicap Access: No

Fishing Pier: No

Shoreline: Yes

Species:

Largemouth Bass

Bluegill

Pumpkinseed

Rainbow Trout (stocked)

Brown Trout (stocked)

Specific Rules for Twin Ponds: Boats are prohibited. Shoreline access is available.

Tips:

Several warm-water species provide year round fishing opportunities. The best fishing is near the dam on the north side of the pond. The south end is extremely shallow. In the summer, twin ponds can become covered in a thick mat of algae. Check out the pond in the spring and fall for your best fishing opportunities.



2008 Town of Huntington Seminar participants shows off their catch at Twin Ponds in Centerport, NY.



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NYS DEC Region 1 Fisheries in cooperation with Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) has been working to develop a recovery plan for the banded sunfish. Development of this plan includes: mapping the current location of the species in the Peconic River drainage area, identifying banded sunfish habitat requirements, compiling data on the species, determining water quality concerns, hydrological conditions, and limiting factors for the species.

In 2007, the NYS DEC Region 1 Fisheries Unit began its search for the elusive banded sunfish. Lead by myself, Freshwater Fisheries Biologist Heidi O'Riordan, we have documented the presence of banded sunfish in 29 locations in the Peconic drainage area (Towns of Brookhaven, Riverhead and Southampton). Armed with waders and a small seine net we search through vegetation such as bladderwort or grasses and reeds. We also use a scap net to search near woody shrubs or emergent plants.

Many of the ponds where banded sunfish are found are on protected lands owned by Suffolk County or the State of New York. This will protect banded sunfish habitat from development however this species still faces several threats. Ponds where banded sunfish are found are particularly vulnerable to dry conditions and low water table levels. Several ponds have completely dried up and no longer provide habitat for any fish species. Other threats include the spread of invasive plant species, an example being phragmites, which out compete many of the native plants, completely eliminating banded sunfish habitat. Largemouth bass, which have been illegally stocked by fisherman or spread from pond to pond during high water levels, prey upon the banded sunfish. Bluegill sunfish and pumpkinseed sunfish are also a threat as

competitors.

Although the work is sometimes taxing, finding this species is worth the time and effort. The recovery plan of the banded sunfish can potentially remove this species from New York's threatened list. New York State will benefit from the recovery plan by providing the need for natural resource protection, preservation and land use management of the sensitive Long Island ecosystems. Data collected during development of the recovery plan will benefit:

- the species by providing a basis to study population trends to prevent extirpation
- the residents of New York State by maintaining and preserving species diversity
- the State of New York by allowing the re-evaluation of the current status of the SGCN
- neighboring states by collaborating regional conservation efforts

Information gathered will also be shared amongst National and worldwide information databases, such as the World Conservation Union and NatureServe. Data will be made available to the scientific community, resource managers, decision-makers, property owners, the public and any other interested parties.

References:

Smith, C.L. 1985. The Inland Fishes of New York State. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. Albany, NY. 522pp.



The Search for the Banded Sunfish:

Photos courtesy of SUNY Cobleskill
NYS DEC Fisheries intern Cory Tizzio



Using a seine net, Fisheries Biologist Heidi O'Riordan and Seasonal Technician Kaitlin Friedman search a location for banded sunfish.



Banded sunfish prefer shallow slow moving water with an abundance of vegetation. This water body in the Peconic drainage area represents prime banded sunfish habitat.



Shown above Biologist Heidi O'Riordan and Environmental Education Asst. Charlie Vullo survey a new location. This summer the fisheries team surveyed 12 locations, finding banded sunfish in 2 new water bodies.

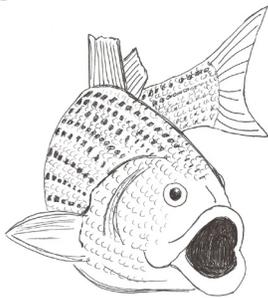


The photo above shows a banded sunfish found this summer in the Peconic drainage area. Banded sunfish are the smallest of the sunfish species growing to a maximum of only two inches.

Seafood Safety Update!

The New York State Department of Health recently released a new colorful brochure titled "New York City Area, Health Advice on Eating Fishing You Catch." Included in this brochure are: the 2010-2011 seafood health advisories for NYC, maps showing the areas covered under these advisories, and information on advisories, health risks, and purchasing and cooking seafood.

This brochure is especially helpful for women of childbearing age, as consuming contaminated seafood can be dangerous for the development of unborn children. To view this brochure online, go to <<http://www.nyhealth.gov/publications/2784.pdf>> or check out the NYS Department of Health website at <www.nyhealth.gov/fish>.



artwork by Ann TeNyenhuis

NOAA Fisheries FishWatch Program

Living in the NYC and Long Island region, we are surrounded by seafood and sushi restaurants, and large seafood markets. But did you ever stop to think before sitting down to a large sushi dinner, "Is this meal ocean friendly?"

The National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA) National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) FishWatch Program is designed to help consumers make informed seafood choices. By visiting the FishWatch website, at <<http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/fishwatch/>>, consumers can view important information on any seafood species and the fishery. On each species page, you'll find information on the status of the fishery, fisheries management, harvesting impact, the science on the species, species biomass, and other helpful information.

Popular Sushi Species:

Salmon
Yellowtail flounder
Tuna
Eel
Shrimp



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

I FISH NY provides all bait and tackle.

Long Island:

Saturday, October 16th, 2010

Fall Fishing Festival
Hempstead Lake State Park
10am-4pm
Loaner rods and bait provided.
Children's events include: casting for pumpkins, pumpkin decorating, pony rides, a magic show, and face painting.

NYC:

Saturday October 9th, 2010

Baisley Pond Fishing Clinic
Baisley Pond Park
10am-2pm
Designated Free Fishing Day,
no license required.

To get more information,
log on to <http://www.ifishnewyork.org>.

To ask questions or register,
call 631.444.0283 (LI) or 718.482.4022 (NYC).

