

pirate perch *Aphredoderus sayanus*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Osteichthyes

Order: Percopsiformes

Family: Aphredoderidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The pirate perch may attain a length of two and one-half to four and one-half inches. Ctenoid (rough-edged) scales cover the head and body. Weak spines are present in the dorsal and anal fins. The pelvic fins are situated very close to the pectoral fins. This fish has a large mouth and a large head. The anus is in the throat. The anus is located in a typical position (close to the anal fin) in young fish but moves forward as the fish grows and develops. The back and sides are gray or black, often with black speckles, while the belly is yellow-white. A black teardrop mark is present under the eye. A black bar can be seen at the base of the tail fin. All the fins are dark, and the lateral line is absent or incomplete. The gill cover has a sharp spine. Breeding adults appear to have a violet sheen, and breeding males are nearly black. The pirate perch has a life span of about four years.

BEHAVIORS

The pirate perch may be found statewide in Illinois. This fish lives in swamps, sloughs, ponds, lakes, creeks and rivers over mud in areas with plenty of vegetation. The pirate perch spawns in spring. There is some indication that the eggs may be incubated in the gill chamber of the female. This solitary fish hides in vegetation during the day and feeds at night. It lives on or near the bottom eating insects, crustaceans and small fishes.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

bottomland forests; lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams; swamps

Woodland Habitats

bottomland forests;

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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