

Game Fish of the Big South Fork Area

The Big south Fork NRRA follows the same rules and regulations set forth by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. For more information, you can contact the Bandy Creek Visitor Center at (423) 286-7275 or visit them online at www.tnwildlife.org. In Kentucky you can call (800) 858-1549 or visit them online at fw.ky.gov.

Native channel catfish: Native channel catfish can be found in the pools of the larger waters of the system and in the channels of the main river. Channel catfish generally weigh 2-4 pounds with a 10 pound catch considered a good catch.

Blue catfish (chucklehead): Blue catfish can be found in the same areas as the channel catfish. Size, breeding, and feeding habits are similar to the channel catfish.

Flathead catfish (shovelhead): Flathead catfish are widespread in major streams, rivers, and lakes throughout the system. Adults weighing more than 50 pounds are common.

Longear sunfish: Longear sunfish are found throughout the system. They can reach a length of up to 9.5 inches and a weight of about 1.7 pounds. They prefer densely vegetated, shallow waters in lakes, ponds, and slow moving streams.

Muskellunge (muskie): Muskie are found mainly on the Clear Fork River. They can grow 2-4 feet long and weigh over 20 pounds. They prefer to hide in weeds and floating plants where they wait for prey. They are generally solitary, but can form in small schools where prey is plentiful.

Rock bass (redeye): Rock bass are found throughout the system. They can reach a length of up to 17 inches and a weight of about three pounds. They prefer clear, rocky, and vegetated stream pools and lake shores.

Smallmouth bass: Smallmouth bass are widespread throughout the system. They can reach a length of around 27 inches and a weight of about 12 pounds. They prefer clear, shallow, rocky bottomed areas of lakes and rivers. They cannot tolerate pollution, so their presence is a sign of a healthy environment.

Largemouth bass: Largemouth bass are found at the north end of the system and in Cumberland Lake. They are the largest of the black basses and can reach an overall length of 38 inches and a maximum weight of 22 pounds. They prefer warm, clear, calm water and are generally found in slow-moving streams, ponds, and lakes.

Striped bass: Striped bass are found throughout the system. They can grow 3-5 feet in length and weigh as much as 100 pounds. They prefer the channel of the river or deep coves near the outlet of small streams. Trolling is another way to catch this fish.

White bass: White bass are found in the large pools of the main river. They range in length from 10-15 inches and weight from 1-4 pounds. They normally stay near the surface during the

day and near the bottom at night. They are easily frightened and require a great deal of patience to catch, but when caught will provide a good fight.

Spotted bass (Kentucky bass): Spotted bass are widespread in the warmer, quieter spots of the system. They are part of the black bass family and can grow to about 25 inches and weigh up to 10 pounds. It closely resembles the smallmouth bass and is often mistaken for one. The spotted bass is the state fish of Kentucky.

Walleye: Walleye are found in the deep pools of the river and lakes. It migrates to tributary streams in the winter and spring to lay eggs in sand or gravel bars. It is considered one of the tastiest freshwater fish and is usually caught at night due to its nocturnal feeding habit.

Brown trout: Brown Trout are found at the Laurel Fork of North Whiteoak. It is considered a medium sized fish, growing from about two pounds in smaller streams and rivers to as much as 10-20 pounds in larger rivers and lakes. A high percentage of males die after spawning and less than 20% of the females survive spawning.

Rainbow trout: Rainbow trout can be found at Pickett Lake and Rock Creek. They range from 12-14 inches in length and weigh up to about four pounds. They are a cool to cold water fish and generally won't tolerate higher temperatures.

Brook trout: Brook trout are found at Pickett Lake and Rock Creek. They can grow up to 12 inches and weigh approximately two pounds. They prefer cool, clear lakes, streams, and rivers with plenty of oxygenation.

Crappie (white and black): White and black crappie are found in Cumberland Lake. They both grow to about 21 inches and can weigh up to about five pounds. They prefer slower moving water, although the black crappie has more of a preference for clearer water than the white crappie does.

The Big South Fork NRRA appreciates your participation in the enjoyment of the vast resources offered in the park. We ask that you be a responsible angler to preserve the environment and keep it clean for the continued use of future generations. We have an active program of mussel repatriation, which is vital to the survival of this and other aquatic species. It is illegal to take any fish, turtle, or mussel that are endangered, threatened, or listed as in need of management. Tennessee and Kentucky have reciprocal licensing agreements on boat fishing from Leatherwood Ford (TN Hwy. 297) to Yamacraw Bridge (KY Hwy. 92). This does not cover fishing from bridges or banks.