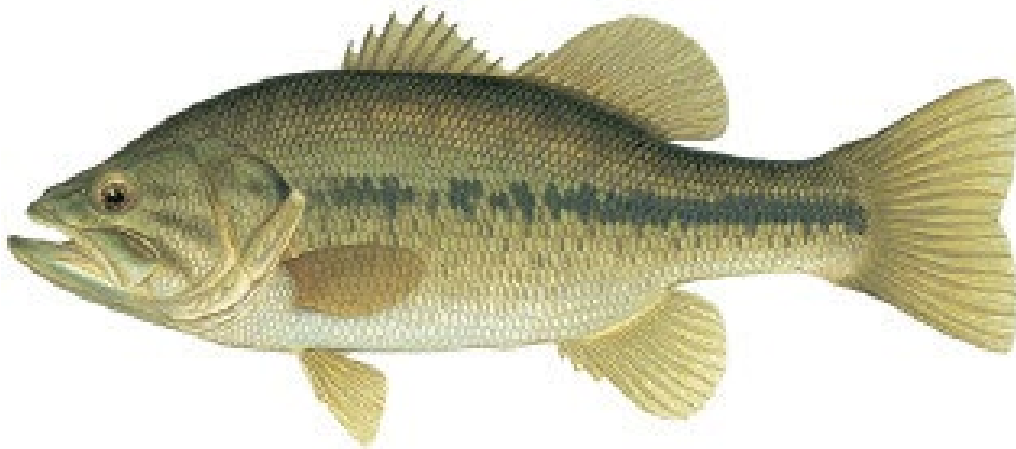


The Fish of Bear Valley Spring's Lakes



Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus salmoides*)



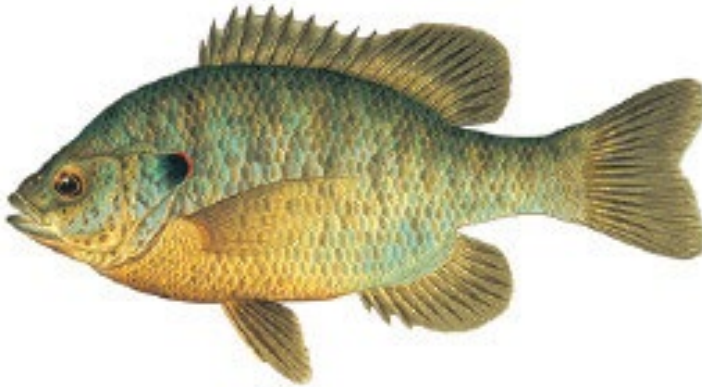
Florida Largemouth Bass have mouths that extend at least as far as their eyes. They grow faster than other bass and can reach 8-12 inches within one year. Many bass weighing over 10 lbs. have been caught in California. The largest was caught in Castaic Lake, weighing 21 lbs. 12 ounces. Largemouth Bass are one of the best known and most popular game-fish in North America. They prefer shallower areas of ponds and lakes with vegetation or brush coverage. Largemouth Bass love to strike at a lure or bait, making them fun to catch. They are sold by the inch so stocking juveniles and allowing them to grow is important. Providing structure or fish habitat within the lakes allows them to grow and reproduce, creating a self-sustaining population. Largemouth Bass are found in both Cub Lake and Four Island Lake.

Blue Gill (*Lepomis macrochirus*)



The Bluegill is native to the Eastern United States, except for the North-East. They are now successfully stocked in all 48 continental states. Commonly growing to 9 inches and 3/4 lbs., Bluegill make a great fish to catch and are also an excellent forage food for Bass. The largest Bluegill ever taken on a hook and line weighed 4 lbs. 12 oz; it was 15 inches long and had a girth of 18.25 inches. They are identified by 5 to 9 vertical bars on their sides, black opercular (ear) flap with no margin, and a dark spot at the rear of the dorsal fin. Bluegills are found in both Cub Lake and Four Island Lake

Red-ear Sunfish (*Lepomis microlophus*)



A large Red-ear Sunfish can average 8-10 inches and can weigh up to 5 lbs. This is a popular fish to stock because of its large size and rapid growth rate. Adult Red-ears are most easily recognized by the reddish or orange border of their "ear" flaps or operculum. The male is more brightly colored than the female. The Red-ear is most at home at 5-10 feet of water and typically lives near the bottom of lakes and ponds. Red-ear sunfish's primary forage are crustaceans that carry a parasite which causes swimmers itch. By stocking Red-ear sunfish we control this parasite through an ecologically friendly sustainable approach. Red-ear sunfish can be found in Four Island Lake.

Green Sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*)



Green sunfish are most common in small, warm streams with turbid, mud-bottom pools and aquatic vegetation. They can also be found in ponds and large lakes in shallow weedy areas that are ill-suited to larger predators. They are opportunistic predators, feeding primarily on invertebrates and small fish. Green sunfish have large mouths. The easiest way to identify a green sunfish is the large mouth and green colorations directly behind the mouth. They can live to be 10 years old and as long as 11.75 inches but this only occurs under optimal, less competitive conditions; many 4-5 year old fish only measure 3.1-4 inches. Green sunfish are being kept within the Bear Valley lakes as a forage base for Crappies and Largemouth Bass. Green sunfish can currently be found in Cub Lake and Four Island Lake.

Black Crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*)



Crappie are very popular game fish that many people like to eat. They live in water with lots of plants and stay active throughout the winter. In the winter, Crappie stay in large schools and hide below shoreline brush. When they are young, they feed on plankton, crustaceans, and insects but as they grow, Crappie will feed on minnows and other baby fish. Crappie like fallen trees, weeds, and other structures in the water. They move to the lake shore at dawn and dusk to feed. Crappie feed early in the morning and from about midnight until approximately 2am. Crappie have flattened sides and are usually silvery-gray to green in color. Black crappie have 7 to 8 dorsal spines, with random blotches on their sides. The maximum length reported for a black crappie is 19 inches (49 cm) and the maximum published weight is just under 6 lbs. Adult black crappie feed on fewer fish than white crappie do; instead they consume a larger volume of insects and crustaceans. By consuming insects, Black Crappie function as a biological insect control with the lakes. Black crappies are found in both Cub Lake and Four Island Lake.

Channel Catfish (*Ictalurus punctatus*)



Channel catfish are the most common catfish in North America. They have odor-sensing organs (olfactory organs) near their nostrils and characteristic barbels (whiskers) under their mouth which contributes to super-sensitive senses of smell and taste. This allows them to feed even in muddy water. They eat insects, worms, minnows, crustaceans, and sunfish. These catfish have dark spots on their sides when young, 24 to 29 rays in a rounded anal fin, and notably, the caudal (tail) fin is deeply forked. Channel catfish are currently only found within Cub Lake. These are remnants from a previous fish stocking.

Black (*Ameiurus melas*) and Yellow (*Ameriurus natalis*) Bullhead Catfish



Bullhead catfish have rounded tails. Black bullheads have black chin barbels while Yellow bullheads have cream colored chin barbels. Black and Yellow bullheads are some of the smaller members of the Ictaluridae (Catfish) family ranging from 6 to 14 inches and weighing about 2 lbs. but can get up to 4lbs. They live a long time, up to 12 years, and can live in warm water, low oxygen conditions, and can survive in contaminated water.

Bullheads cause major problems in the Bear Valley Spring's lakes by out-competing other fish for oxygen, while also raiding the nests and eating the eggs of Bluegills, Crappies, Largemouth Bass, and Red-ear sunfish. If you have seen black balls of baby fish close to shore, near the surface in July and August, these are schools of baby Bullheads. **We are asking that you keep and dispose of all the bullheads that you catch in any of the lakes, never put them back in the lake.**

Currently we are implementing population control methods for Bullhead catfish so that the lake can sustain a healthy and diverse fish population. Black and Yellow Bullheads are found in both Cub Lake and Four Island Lake.

Golden Shiner (*Notemigonus crysoleucas*)

Golden shiners are thin minnows with upward slanted mouths. They are small and may get as big as 11 inches (30 centimeters). They like deep stagnant water. Golden shiners feed on algae and zooplankton, and are often seen close to shore just before sunset. Golden shiners are found in all the BVS lakes and will continue to be stocked as supplemental forage for the game-fish in the lakes. Golden shiners are also helpful in reducing algae and insect larvae within the lakes.



Western Mosquitofish (*Gambusia affinis*)



Western Mosquitofish have been stocked in the lakes and other standing water (such as animal troughs) as a public health means to control the mosquito population. This helps to prevent the spread of many types of disease carried by mosquitoes. They were originally introduced to California in 1922 and are an important part of vector control, which is the natural and effective elimination of insects that carry disease. In addition, they represent a natural forage base for the other game-fish in our lakes. They reproduce prolifically and are usually provided for free by the Kern Mosquito and Vector Control District. We intend to have a breeding population in one of our ponds to provide stock for our lakes, but also to provide fish for residents to put in their own standing water areas.

Rainbow Trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)



Rainbow trout are cold-water fish that need lots of dissolved oxygen, and die-off in water above 70°F. Trout have traditionally been stocked in Four Island lake 2-3 times a year starting in November and ending in May. Because they cannot survive rising lake temperatures and declining oxygen conditions all summer, they do not reproduce or represent a sustainable fish population for the BVS lakes. Trout have a white mouth, teeth, and gums and have small black spots on the back, sides, caudal (tail), and dorsal (back) fins. The caudal fin margin is square. As of 2020, BVSA no longer intends to stock trout within the lakes. The lakes will instead be managed as sustainable warm water fisheries. For residents that would like to catch trout, the Tehachapi park district generally holds a yearly trout derby in the spring at Brite lake.

Information Courtesy of: **WILLOW CREEK FISHERIES** <https://www.wcfisheries.com/willow-creek-fisheries>
 California Fish and Wildlife <https://wildlife.ca.gov/> and <https://wildlife.ca.gov/Fishing/Inland>
Indiana Department of Fish and Wildlife <http://www.eregulations.com/indiana/fishing/fish-identification/>, and
Maryland DNR <https://dnr.maryland.gov/fisheries/Pages/catfish.aspx>