

Fish of the Big Muddy

Missouri River fish are specially adapted to different parts of the river. Channel and flathead catfish feed at the bottom. Sturgeon are usually found in faster water. Many kinds of fish—gar, sunfishes, suckers, catfishes, goldeye—use wetlands in the river floodplain for spawning.

In the 1980s accidentally released silver and bighead carp—known as Asian carp—began invading the Missouri

and Mississippi rivers. Now these two species are probably the most abundant in the river. Bighead carp compete with paddlefish, bigmouth buffalo, and gizzard shad.

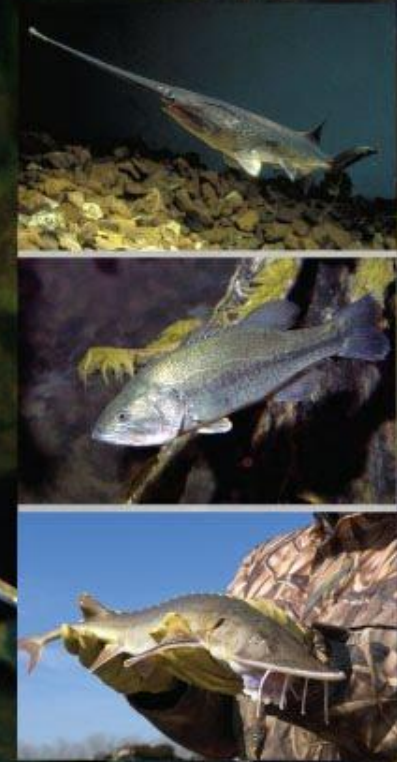
From the St. Charles Ecopark anglers can fish in the Missouri River. Please be sure to follow all state fishing regulations.

RIVERS CHANGE, TOO

Fish diversity in the Missouri River isn't what it used to be. Once the river was a wide, braided series of channels with islands, sloughs, scour holes, oxbow lakes, wetlands, even rapids. All these provided homes and food sources for fish. Annual spring rises helped fish spawn in shallow wetlands and feeder streams. Now large upstream reservoirs hold back sediment and reduce the annual spring rise.



Bluegill



Top: Paddlefish are an ancient species. **Middle:** Anglers prize largemouth bass. **Bottom:** Endangered pallid sturgeon are tagged with transmitters. **Background:** Flathead catfish. (All photos courtesy of Missouri Department of Conservation)