

River Redhorse

Contributed by Administrator
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The River Redhorse is the second largest of the redhorses. A large, powerful fish, the river redhorse has a bright red tail and a olive-bronze body with large scales. The mouth is large and fleshy. River Redhorse have a concave dorsal, a pointed tip to the tail fin, and six scales across the bottom of the tail. River Redhorse are threatened or endangered in many areas, but in the few clean, free-flowing rivers that are left, populations of this fish can be strong.

The River Redhorse prefers moderate to swift waters of large clean rivers, the lower portions of their main tributaries, reservoirs and pools over clean gravel and rubble. It is seldom found in deep water with mud, silt, or sand bottom. Their favourite foods include clams, snails, insect larvae, and crustaceans.

Born and bred to live in swift current, this torpedo-shaped mauler has incredible strength and endurance. You should gear up well for pursuing these fish, equipping yourself not only with heavy enough tackle to handle them, but also with a large, soft-meshed net, some forceps for hook removal, and a pair of side-cutters for snipping off deeply imbedded hooks. Consider the use of circle hooks to reduce damage to river redhorse you might catch, whenever fishing in waters where they can be found. Always use great care when handling these fish. River redhorse will take a well-presented nightcrawler or crawfish. They also feed on certain species of river clams, crushing them with the molar-like pharyngeal teeth at the back of their throat. Flies tied to resemble clams can be effective when drifted in the current. This fish can exceed ten pounds in weight. It's sheer strength, combined with the heavy currents they live in, demand great respect from the fly angler.

Identification

The River Redhorse has a bright red tail and a concave dorsal fin. Coloration is dark - each scale has a dark patch at the base. Rivers have a large mouth. River Redhorse are most often confused with the Greater Redhorse. Greater can be distinguished by their convex dorsal fin, or by counting the scales across the base of the tail in a diagonal line. Rivers have six scales along this line, while Greater have 8. The upper lobe of the River redhorse's tail is distinctly pointed, unlike that of the Greater redhorse, which has two approximately equal lobes.

photo courtesy of Jknuth

Spawning

The river redhorse begins spawning at a water temperature of approximately 72 degrees. This usually occurs around the beginning June in the midwest. It spawns in riffles from 2-4 feet in depth, covered with gravel. Male river redhorse dig large nests, called redds, to spawn in.

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