

Freshwater Drum (*Aplodinotus grunniens*)

Do they have any other names?

They are also called croaker, white perch, rock perch, and sheephead.

Why are they called freshwater drum?

They are called drum because of the grunting or croaking sound made from muscles in the swim bladder. Also, they are called freshwater drum because they are the only species of drum that live in freshwater. *Aplodinotus* is Greek for “single back,” in reference to the dorsal fin and *grunniens* is Latin for “grunting.”

What do they look like?

Freshwater drum are silvery, deep-bodied fish with long dorsal (back) fins that are divided into two distinct parts. The head and body slope upward from the snout to the dorsal fin to give a distinctive humpbacked appearance.



Photo Credit: Duane Raver/USFWS

Where do they live in Indiana?

Freshwater drum are common in Indiana and can be found in small or large rivers, reservoirs, and the Great Lakes.

What kind of habitat do they need?

In streams freshwater drum are usually found in large pools and reservoirs they are found at depths of 30 feet or more. Freshwater drum avoid strong currents but can tolerate turbid (or murky) waters.

How do they reproduce?

Freshwater drum spawn in late April or May and they make the drumming noise during spawning activities. They spawn in open water and the eggs float for one to two days until hatching. The adults move out of large rivers and reservoirs into tributary streams to spawn.

How old are they when they reproduce?

Males are able to reproduce at 4 years old and females are able to at 5 to 6 years old.

How long do they live?

The maximum life span for freshwater drum is at least 13 years.

How fast do they grow in Indiana?

Freshwater drum reach a length of about 4.4 inches in the first year. Adults commonly are 12 to 20 inches in length and weigh up to about 5 pounds.

What do they eat?

Freshwater drum live mainly on the bottom and move rocks with their snouts to find food. They eat fish, crayfish, and aquatic insects.

What eats them?

The main predators for freshwater drum are other fish and humans.

Are they safe to eat?

Wild caught fish are just as healthy for you as most commercially bought fish and in many cases are healthier. You have probably heard about the fish consumption advisories and wonder if any Indiana fish are safe to eat. The fish consumption advisories that are posted are based on a model that people are consuming 8 oz. of fish on 225 days each year over 70 years. Most people do not eat fish anywhere close to that amount. However, any meat you consume will have some risk associated with it. If you are in a high risk group such as a pregnant woman or a child please consult the fish consumption advisory at: www.in.gov/isdh/23650.htm . You can also see

which waterbody has advisories on it (most lakes and reservoirs are lower risk than rivers and streams).

How do I fish for them?

Most drum are taken on live bait fished on the bottom; worms, crayfish, and small minnows are favorite baits. Occasionally they can be taken on small artificial lures like spinners and fly-and-spinner combinations.

How is Indiana managing freshwater drum?

Freshwater drum are native to Indiana waters and are not stocked by the state. The populations of freshwater drum are monitored however with fisheries surveys.