



Pumpkinseed Trivia

Test your **sunfish** knowledge after watching teacher Jess Paulson's sunfish video on the Forest Facebook and Twitter page from June 24, 2020.

1. Pumpkinseeds are members of which fish family?

- A. Perch
- B. Pike
- C. Sunfish
- D. Killifish

2. Pumpkinseeds get their name from their:

- A. Body shape
- B. Belly color
- C. Shape and color of their fins
- D. Tendency to strike actual pumpkin seeds

3. Pumpkinseeds are also known as:

- A. Sun Bass
- B. Round sunfish
- C. Bream
- D. Both A and C
- E. All of the above

4. Which of these are also in the sunfish family?

- A. Largemouth Bass
- B. Rock Bass
- C. Bluegill
- D. All of the above.

5. Minnesota's state record pumpkinseed weighed:

- A. 3 lbs, 12 oz
- B. 8 lbs, 1 oz
- C. 11 oz
- D. 1 lb, 5 oz

6 Pumpkinseeds are most active:

- A. In the Afternoon
- B. Early in the Morning
- C. After midnight
- D. After the muskies have eaten

7 Fishing for pumpkinseeds, look for this habitat:

- A. Open sandy shallow waters
- B. Quiet weedy shallow lakes
- C. Fast moving streams
- D. Deep water off rock ledges

8 Pumpkinseeds create small, saucer-shaped nests in gravel or sand in shallow waters. Who tends the nest?

- A. Females Only.
- B. Males Only.
- C. Both Male and Female
- D. Neither. The nest is abandoned.

9 How many eggs will a female pumpkinseed lay?

- A. 4-6
- B. 400-600
- C. 14,000-16,000
- D. 30,000-40,000

10 Female pumpkinseeds:

- A. Have no interest in the nest
- B. Sometimes lay eggs in multiple nests
- C. Interbreed with other sunfish species
- D. All of the above

11 Pumpkinseeds have a diverse diet, eating everything from insect larvae to crayfish. What other special adaptation do they have to eat their food?

- A. Unique throat structure and teeth to eat snails
- B. Two short beaver teeth to dig up larvae
- C. Triple stomachs to digest shellfish
- D. Needle-like teeth to grab smaller fish

12 Male pumpkinseeds are more colorful:

- A. In the autumn as the water cools
- B. In the late spring/summer during nesting time
- C. On sunny days
- D. When their diet is made up of crayfish

13 What are the largest threats to pumpkinseeds and other sunfish?

- A. Fishing pressure
- B. Herons
- C. Shoreline disruption
- D. Disease from living in colonies

14 Pumpkinseeds have this unique characteristic:

- A. They sometimes “fly” out of the water using their large fins to glide above the water.
- B. They flip and swim upside down to attract mates with their bright orange stomachs.
- C. They have a strong instinct for their home range and can find it when displaced.
- D. They have a strong smell, which keep them from being eaten by predators.

15 If you are fishing for sunfish, and you don’t get a bite in the first five minutes, what should you do?

- A. Stay put. Sunfish are slow but curious and they will come around and start biting.
- B. Stay in place but switch bait. If they aren’t biting on worms, try a rapala.
- C. Move to a new site. Try again. You’ll find the spot.
- D. Start trolling over the weed beds with a neon worm.

16 Pumpkinseeds strike at many different baits.

What attracts any sunfish to strike?

- A. Action
- B. Shape
- C. Color
- D. Scent

Answers:

1. **C** Pumpkinseeds are members of the sunfish family. Many people refer to this group of fish as panfish, perhaps because not only are they shaped like a pan, but the fillets are small and fit well into a pan for a tasty meal.
2. **B** Though they are identified by the orange red spot on the back of their gill cover, the pumpkinseed is named for it's bright orange belly. The latin name for pumpkinseed is *Lepomis gibbosus*. *Lepomis* for the scaled gill cover of the sunfish family and *gibbosus* which means "formed like the full moon", referring to the fishes round plate shape.
3. **E** All of the above. Pumpkinseeds have all sorts of names depending on the area you live. Sun Bass, Round sunfish, bream, common sunfish, sunny and yellow sunfish are just a few of many names for a pumpkinseed.
4. **D** All of the above. In North America, we count 30 different members of the sunfish family. Eleven of those reside in Minnesota waters, including the smallmouth, largemouth and rock bass, war mouth, 5 types of "sunnies", white crappie and black crappie.
5. **D** 1 lb, 5 oz. This monster of the shallow waters was caught on Leech Lake in 1999. The state record bluegill was also caught nearby on Alice Lake in Hubbard County at 2 lbs, 13 oz.
6. **A** This sunfish loves the sun and is active throughout the day, though pumpkinseeds are most active in the afternoon. They are more tolerant of low oxygen levels than bluegills but less tolerant of warm water. Ideal water temps range from 75-89 degrees F.
7. **B** Quiet, weedy shallow lakes, ponds and streams. Pumpkinseeds are found in shallow, cool to moderately warm water. They prefer some type of cover, such as aquatic vegetation or logs. Most young fish school close to shore, but adults will travel in groups of 2-4 in slightly deeper water as long as there is cover. They rest at night near the bottom in protected areas in rocks or logs.

8. **B** Males only. The males build nests when water temps reach 55-63 degrees. They used their caudal fins to sweep out shallow depressions and even remove larger rocks with their mouths. Nests are built in colonies of 3-15 nest sites and males very aggressively defend their nests—chasing other fish out, charging and even nibble on the toes of unsuspecting swimmers who get too close!
9. **D**. Female sunfish will lay up to 38,000 eggs. A nest will sometimes hold 60,000 eggs as multiple females lay eggs in the same nest. Males protect the nest, and the young hatch out within three days. Males protect young for about 11 days, even using his mouth to retrieve young straying too far from the nest.
10. **D** All of the above. Females have no role in making the nest, guarding the nest, or protecting the young. They are not tied to one male—and sometimes more than one female will circle a nest, laying eggs at the same time. Because the nests are in colonies, pumpkinseeds often breed with other species, especially bluegills.
11. **A** Pumpkinseeds have specialized teeth and throat structure which makes them avid snail eaters. Other sunfish do not have this adaptation. This is a benefit for the pumpkinseeds re: competing for food, and also a benefit in the fight against invasive species. Pumpkinseeds eat zebra mussels, a very aggressive invasive found in southern Minnesota.
12. **B** Male pumpkinseeds become especially colorful while they are nesting. Perhaps to call in a female, or to ward off other males from the nesting site!
13. **C** Though fishermen and predators like herons eat sunfish, the largest threat to pumpkinseed populations is definitely habitat destruction. As more people develop shoreline, sunfish spawning grounds are destroyed and increased silt from shoreline erosion covers spawning sites. Heavy lake use can also stir up water and disrupt spawning.
14. **C**. They have a strong instinct for their home range. Fisheries biologists have found that fish caught in one section of a lake and transported a distance away on the same lake will find their way back to their original home area.

15. **C.** Move to a new site and try again. If you are using live bait such as crickets, worms, grubs, you are on the right bait but maybe just not the right spot. Remember sunfish stick to their home area, and once you find it, you are in the sunnies!

16 **A.** Sunfish are sight feeders and get their food by lying in wait and making a sudden lunge for it. To fish for pumpkinseeds, anglers often fish under a bobber with a worm near the bottom and use a jigging action. Small baits, jigs and flies attract the most pumpkinseeds.

Congratulations on your pumpkinseed knowledge! Now go out and catch some sunfish!