

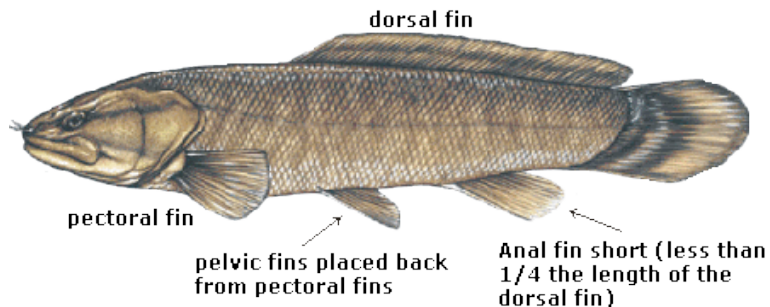
Bowfin

Did you know that Rock Lake is home to the prehistoric native fish species, the bowfin (*Amia calva*)?

This fish is a living dinosaur. This fish was represented in middle Mesozoic strata over 100 million years ago. This is the only fish that survived from its family (Amiidae) of fishes from long ago. While primitive, the bowfin exhibits several evolutionary advances, including a gas bladder that can be used as a primitive lung (they can often be seen gulping air at the surface of the water), and specialized reproduction including male parental care (the male builds nests and guards the young for months).

Not only is this fish a dinosaur, but it is important to the lake's ecosystem. Bowfin are voracious, effective and opportunistic predators that have been mislabeled as a threat to panfish and sport fish populations. The bowfin is frequently found as part of the native fish fauna in many excellent sport and panfish waters in Wisconsin. In fact, studies have shown that the bowfin is effective in preventing stunting in sport fish populations. Bowfin have also been used as an additional predator in waters that are prone to overpopulation of carp and other rough fish species.

Bowfin (native)



The bowfin (commonly referred to as dogfish) has a large mouth equipped with many sharp teeth. Its large head has no scales. The dorsal fin is long, extending more than half the length of the back. The tail fin is rounded. There is a barbel-like flap associated with each nostril. The back is mottled olive green shading to lighter green on the belly. The dorsal fin is dark green, while all others are light green. Young fish have a distinctive black spot near the base of the upper portions of the tail fin. The spot is usually margined with yellow or orange. Although it persists in adult fish, it is less prominent in females.

*Sources: <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/EcoNatRes/EcoNatRes-idx?type=turn&id=EcoNatRes.FishesWI&entity=EcoNatRes.FishesWI.p0259&q1=bowfin> and <http://dnr.wi.gov/fish/faq/snakehead.html>