



SCULPINS

This small fish has a name longer than it is. Never-the-less it's found in the West Fork River. Whether it is the Potomac sculpin (*Cottus Girardi*) or the Mottled sculpin (*Cottus Bairdi*) I have not been able to determine which, as they are very similar. The word sculpin means scorpion, and they get this name for the spines in their dorsal fin.

These tiny fish are primarily found in the Appalachian river drainages. They prefer small riffles, shallow pools over sand, gravel, and small rocks. Sculpins favor relatively clear water with some form of shelter. They stay close to the bottom of streams to hide from larger fish. Their coloring is such that they blend readily with the bottom of silted rocky streams. Sculpins are a food source for large-mouthed bass, trout and muskellunge. Sculpins on the average never grow longer than 4-5 inches, thus are preyed upon by larger predators. Humans do not eat these fish.

Sculpin diets consist of aquatic insect larvae, waterfleas, leeches, and algae. They breed when water temperatures reach the mid 60's to 75 degrees F. Usually the months April and May. Females lay 100 to 700 eggs per season. Male Sculpins protect the nest of eggs keeping them clean and free from any fungus on found on dead embryos. The eggs hatch in 5 to 8 days. Sculpins live an average of 3 years.

Sculpins, darters, daces, chubs, and shiners are abundant in the West Fork River and all are food for our larger fish. These larger fish, primarily large-mouth bass, muskellunge and the larger small-mouthed bass are found in deeper water.

There are four small dams on the upper West Fork River that back up approximately 12 miles of deeper water. When and if three of these dams are removed, this deeper water on the upper West Fork River will no longer exist for the larger fish. The upper West Fork River from the Highland Dam will no longer be a river. The result of removing the three dams will be a small gravely stream for small fish with no recreational value to fishermen, fishing boats and many of the land owners that live along the upper West Fork River.

It's such a shame to remove the dam structures that have been in place 50-90 years, ruining 12 miles of very good fishing waters, but we will have an abundant of clubshell mussels, and many 1-4 inch small fish.

Jim Nedrow
Elk Hunter

GUARDIANS



West Fork Fishing

We have been fishing on the West Fork River the past three weekends with good results. Last Saturday, we encountered five other fisherman fishing for bass. Three of them were below the Clarksburg treatment plant using a crawfish imitation. They had just landed a bass. A father and son were fishing with small live minnows which they seined themselves. They were catching many bass below Limestone Junction. They also told of catching a bass and a musky grabbing on for a while. We told them that had happened to us on two occasions. Bill Murphy caught several nice bass up to 14 inches fishing on the bottom with a crawfish imitation. I was fishing crank baits without much luck. We were a mile and a half or better below the treatment plant. This past weekend we fished in the Kincheloe area and caught several nice bass. Bill was using the same crawfish imitation, and I was using top water and other crank baits. Bill landed two beautiful smallmouths in the 17-18 inch class. We probably landed over twenty bass that day.

When we fish the beautiful West Fork River we are upset and saddened by the trash people throw over the banks and in the river. One would think fisherman fishing from the bank and enjoying the river would not trash it. In almost every instance they leave their bait cans, bottles, and pop cans for the river to carry away. This happens everywhere we fish. A year ago there was a sofa and chair thrown over the bank and into the river along the Country Club gravel road. That fall we saw a bear carcass floating in the same area. Other people who call themselves West Virginians throw garbage bags from the Meadowbrook Bridge for the river to carry away. In the Good Hope area we see auto parts thrown over the bank. We encounter every type of household appliances thrown into the river. I am estimating there are several hundred cars, truck, and tractor tires every stretch of the river from Worthington to Weston. People do not want to pay for tire companies to get rid of their tires. I wish we had some kind of use for all of them so we could recycle. Maybe people would start dragging them from the river. If the dams are removed from the river the agencies doing that have said they would remove all of the trash that would be exposed. They do not know what they are in for. Lack of access will be a big problem. We have this great river which still is the best kept secret in West Virginia and still many abuse it.

Mike Murphy
Lumberport,WV

Dear Friends,

The West Fork River is wide, deep and healthy. It is full of fish, birds and a wide assortment of wonderful animals. The people working at your company have come to know and enjoy the river. Without your help a tragedy is about to occur that will destroy the river forever. The West Fork River is about to become nothing more than a very wet and muddy, walking path.

As I am sure you are aware, the Clarksburg Water Board no longer needs or wants to continue ownership of the dams between Weston and Clarksburg. They are working together with the West Virginia Fishery Resource Office and USDA in an effort to use our tax dollars to remove the dams and destroy the river. This is scheduled to begin late this year and continue over the next three to five years. Time is very short.

Over the past 7 years the Guardians have performed remedial work on the river, in many cases with your company's participation. Much of this work was done on behalf of surface mining companies, local communities and land owners. Problems with mine run-off, bank erosion and litter along the river have been and are being addressed by the Guardians. Our goal is to continue this work, as well as constructing facilities for improved river access.

Now we are asking for your help to save the West Fork River.

The Water Board and Fishery Office have the funding but don't want the dams. The Guardians want the dams but don't have the funding. Not often does a "Win - Win" opportunity such as this present itself in the World today. If the Guardians prevail, all sides win.

If you can help us with a generous contribution, the Guardians of the West Fork River will be able to take ownership of the dams and preserve the beautiful river. Make your check out to Guardians of the West Fork Watershed and mail it to the address below.

To learn more about our organization, see the most recent newsletter at <http://www.guardiansofthewestfork.com/May%202010.pdf>. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to call me personally at (304)363-4111 or email at JMELEYETTE@rocketmail.com.

Sincerely,

John Eleyette
Executive Officer/Guardians of the West Fork Watershed
830 Benoni Avenue
Fairmont, WV 26554

West Fork Dams

I have fished on the West Fork River since the 70's. The fishing on the river is probably the best kept secret in the state. The river doesn't have access points for most people to get on the river to enjoy the bass and musky fishing. My son and I have caught 18in. bass and 44-48 inches musky. The article in Saturday's paper disturbed me very much. The federal and state people do not live in our area. They don't fish or boat on the river. They have no idea of the numerous wildlife along the river or all of the different species of fish that thrive here. Yet they want to remove the dams and probably ruin the Largemouth Bass and Musky fishing with the idea of attracting mussels. Removing the dams would not improve fish habitat. It would expose all of the logs and limbs along each side of the river plus all of the trash that people throw in the river. It is a false statement that is made in the article which states the fish will migrate from the Monongahela River to the Stonewall Jackson Dam. In the first place there is a dam at Worthington, one in Clarksburg, and two in the town of Weston. I haven't heard of any great fish migrations from the Monongahela to Worthington. We have fished those sections of the river. The best fishing is from Worthington to Weston. Clarksburg to Jackson's Mill is the prime water of the West Fork. I cannot understand why more citizens who live along the river, have a joining farm or have cabins there haven't expressed their concerns to keep the dams in place.

Mike Murphy

Lumberport, WV

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Jeff Reichel, jreichel@malletoil.com
(membership coordinator);

Mike Murphy, Lumberport

John Stenger, and James E Nedrow, Shinnston WV

Mark your Calendars

Monthly Meetings

Meetings are held the third Wednesday of the month, 6:30 p.m., at the Nutter Fort emergency services (911) building, about 200 feet south of the Joyce St./Rt. 98 intersection, on the right.

August 17, 2011

September 21, 2011

October 19, 2011 (Board Mtg)

November 16, 2011

December 20, 2011

The Guardians alternate general meetings with speakers and refreshments and board meetings where business is discussed.

Feel free to attend any meeting and also bring interested friends and family.

To Join and Receive this Newsletter ...

If you would like to join and receive a mailed copy of our quarterly newsletter, you can join Guardians of the West Fork Watershed for \$5.00 per calendar year (or at a voluntary, higher level). Send your membership check and address information to Elaine Lucente, membership coordinator, (Her address can be found on the Officers and Board Members page.), or simply join during one of our monthly meetings. To receive a free e-mail copy of the quarterly newsletter, please e-mail John Eleyette, at JMELEYETTE@rocketmail.com
GWWF MISSION STATEMENT

Guardians of the West Fork Watershed is a volunteer 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the ecological integrity of the West Fork River, its tributaries, and its watershed. It will monitor and assist agencies in monitoring the biological, physical, chemical and cultural characteristics of the watershed to identify sources of degradation and suggest their elimination. It will publicize the status of the watershed and encourage education and recreational enjoyment of the watershed. It will seek wide membership and outside funding to support its activities.