

GEORGIA AQUARIUM ANIMAL FACT SHEET

Longnose Gar *Lepisosteus osseus*

Range/Habitat

- The longnose gar occurs in the Mississippi River system northwest to Montana, through the Great Lakes except Lake Superior, to the St. Lawrence watershed to Quebec and south to northern Mexico.
- This species is the most abundant and widely distributed member of the ancient gar family.
- It is found in sluggish pools, backwaters and oxbows of medium to large rivers and lakes.
- This gar prefers areas of vegetation and occasionally may be found in brackish waters.

Physical Characteristics

- The longnose gar has a very long, slender beak whose length is 18 to 20 times its smallest width.
- Its long cylindrical body is covered with large, overlapping diamond-shaped scales, which distinguish it from all its freshwater relatives.
- Its dorsal fin is located far back on the body, almost over the anal fin.
- This fish is typically grayish to olive-green above and on its sides and white or yellowish below depending on the color of the water.
- The longnose gar can grow to 73 inches (200 cm.) in length and weigh up to 50.7 lbs. (23 kg).
- The female is larger than the male.

Diet/Feeding

- The adult longnose gar feeds almost exclusively on fishes, most heavily on shad, herring and bullheads, with minor predation on minnows and sunfishes.
- The young feed voraciously on small crustaceans and insect larvae, and they grow very rapidly.

Conservation Status

- The longnose gar is not on the IUCN Red List.

Additional Information

- Adults make long migrations to spawning sites in streams that have clear water and a relatively steep gradient.
- Spawning is believed to occur between April and June, when the longnose gar will spawn on gravel shoal areas and among rocks or occasionally in the weedy shallows of lakes and rivers.
- The female longnose gar sheds its eggs in repeated batches and the male fertilizes them as they are released. Instead of close vent-to-vent association between males and females, the males cloud the water with milt.
- Females produce about 30,000 plus eggs per year.

- Frequently, longnose gar eggs and larvae have been found in smallmouth bass nests, where the male bass guards the nest protecting the young gar in addition to its own young.
- It is the most widespread of the gar in the southern U.S., although it is extinct in some of its northern habitats.
- The longnose gar is reported to live up to 36 years.

Sources

www.fishbase.org

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