Fish of Florida Springs, Spring Runs, and Sinkholes

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This table focuses on the species most likely to be of interpretive interest in springs ecosystems. Other native fish often seen in these habitats include metallic shiner, ladyfish, crevalle jack, and mountain mullet, Other exotics sometimes found in these systems include mayan cichlid, Explanatory text and downloadable files are posted at http://floridaspringsinstitute.org. This information was compiled by Linda Duever through a Protect Florida Springs grant and should be cited as follows: Duever, L.C. 2012. Characteristic species of Florida springs, spring runs, and sinkholes. A set of tables funded by the Wildlife Foundation of Florida, Inc. and published in cooperation with the Florida Springs Institute. Conway Conservation. Micanopy, FL.

Scientific Name	Common Name	Notes
Acipenser oxyrinchus desotoi	gulf sturgeon	This large fish travels upstream from the Gulf of Mexico into rivers and springs. It often attracts attention by leaping into the air -- and sometimes into boats. FNAI G3T2/S2. USFWS Threatened. http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Gallery/Descript/gulfsturgeon/gulfsturgeon.html
Alosa sapidissima	american shad	These anadromous fish travel hundreds of miles upstream from the ocean to spawn in large rivers. They are sometimes seen in large springs that flow into the St. Johns River. http://www.floridasprings.org/learn/life/fish/
Ameiurus catus	white catfish	Springs are ideal habitat for this pale fish, which forages in the bottom sediments at night, then retreats into aquatic caves during the day. http://www.outdooralabama.com/fishing/freshwater/fish/catfish/white/
Ameiurus natalis	yellow bullhead	This catfish sometimes occurs in isolated caves. It may even breed underground. http://www.bio.txstate.edu/~tbonner/txfishes/ameiurus%20natalis.htm
Ameiurus nebulosus	brown bullhead	Divers frequently see this night-feeding catfish in or near aquatic caves. http://www.fishbase.us/Photos/PicturesSummary.php?ID=3022&what=species
Ameiurus serracanthus	spotted bullhead	This catfish often enters aquatic caves. It is mottled with splotches of dark brown and silvery blue. http://www.planetcatfish.com/catelog/image.php?image_id=10240
Amia calva	bowfin	These fish are widespread in rivers, lakes and springs. Because they are the last survivors of a nearly extinct group of fish, they are distinctive-looking, with flattened heads, long stout bodies, and dorsal fins that extend from head to tail. http://www.superstock.com/stock-photos-images/1597-35413

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Anguilla rostrata	american eel	These dark snakelike fish live in aquatic caves during the day and move into aboveground shallow water to feed at night. They are catadromous and migrate into the ocean to spawn. http://phojo-frog.smugmug.com/Florida/Morrison-Springs/12922720_mT5Rb3/1537328483_HR5nnq5 - !i=1537328483&k=HR5nnq5
Colossoma macropomum	black pacu	EXOTIC. These large omnivorous Amazonian fish have been observed at Blue Spring. They have big teeth and a powerful bite. Small ones are sometimes mistaken for piranhas. http://animal-world.com/encyclo/fresh/characins/BlackPacu.php
Dasyatis sabina	atlantic stingray	Stingrays sometimes travel into inland springs. They frequently lie buried in the bottom sediment and can cause a painful injury if stepped on. http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/Gallery/Descript/atlanticstingray/atlanticstingray.html
Elassoma evergladei	everglades pygmy sunfish	This little fish is considered an aquarium treasure, primarily because of the beautiful sky-blue spots and fin coloration breeding males can display. It had become scarce in Silver Springs by the early 1940s. http://www.multihobby.net/?okonczyk-moczarowy-(elassoma-evergladei),78&PHPSESSID=mq7a66f4immrn7jg4l0db75io2
Esox niger	chain pickerel	This popular gamefish had become scarce in Silver Springs by the early 1940s. http://www.afripics.co.za/home/products/request-quote.php?ProductID=129981510218
Etheostoma edwini	brown darter	These little fish are frequently seen darting about the bottom in springs and spring runs. Breeding males have bright red-orange spots. http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/southflorida/everglades/marshes/glossary/browndarter.html
Etheostoma olmstedi maculaticeps	tessellated darter	In Florida, this colorful little fish is restricted to the Ocklawaha River and a few of its tributaries. FNAI G5/S1. http://www.jonahsaquarium.com/jonahsite/piceolmstedi01.htm
Fundulus chrysotus	golden topminnow	This colorful little fish is common in a wide variety of habitats, including springs. http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/southflorida/everglades/marshes/glossary/goldentopminnow.html
Fundulus seminolis	seminole killifish	Springs are excellent habitat for this small pale metallic-green fish. http://www2.stetson.edu/biology/amb/finalfishpic/seminole.jpg

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Gambusia holbrooki	eastern mosquitoffish	These little guppy-like fish are common in lots of habitats, including spring systems. http://www2.stetson.edu/biology/amb/florida.htm
Hemichromis letourneuxis	african jewelfish	This colorful aquarium fish has invaded varied South Florida habitats and become established in Eureka Springs. Breeding specimens are suffused with red and dotted with turquoise. http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/specimenviewer.aspx?SpecimenID=261701
Heterandria formosa	least killifish	This tiny fish is the smallest vertebrate in North America. Schools of them are often found in springs, where they forage in open water and hide in mats of floating vegetation. http://www2.stetson.edu/biology/amb/florida.htm
Hoplosternum littorale	brown hoplo catfish	EXOTIC. This bubblenesting aquarium fish has escaped into Florida waters. Biologists say it becomes more common in spring runs after they reduce sailfin armored catfish. http://www.fishbase.org/summary/Hoplosternum-littorale.htm
Ictalurus punctatus	channel catfish	Springs are ideal habitat for these common catfish. They are playful and curious and sometimes attract attention with their "game" of following one another up to the water surface. http://fishindex.blogspot.com/2009/06/channel-catfish-ictalurus-punctatus.html
Jordanella floridae	flagfish	Aquarists value these little turquoise- and orange-striped fish as nonstop filamentous algae eaters. They are common in many Florida aquatic habitats, including springs. http://www.seriouslyfish.com/species/jordanella-floridae
Lepisosteus osseus	longnose gar	Springs are prime habitat for these elongated fish, which are usually seen out in in open water away from the shoreline vegetation. They often lie near the surface at night and sometimes startle nocturnal kayakers. http://fishindex.blogspot.com/2009/07/longnose-gar-lepisosteus-osseus.html
Lepisosteus platyrhincus	florida gar	Springs are prime habitat for these common gars. They are likely to be found in schools gathered along the edges of springs and spring runs in the shadows of shoreline vegetation. Young fish are yellowish with big dark spots. http://www2.stetson.edu/biology/amb/florida.htm

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Lepomis auritus	redbreast sunfish	Although these little fish are not abundant in springs, snorkelers often notice them because of their bold friendly behavior and bright orange undersides. They are usually seen near the surface at headsprings or along spring-run rivers. http://www.floridasprings.org/learn/life/fish
Lepomis macrochirus	bluegill	Springs provide good habitat for this common fish, which sometimes ventures into aquatic caves. This is one of the most abundant fish species in spring runs. Bluegills are often seen schooling around boats and docks, where they can be identified by the dark vertical bars on their sides. http://www.floridasprings.org/learn/life/fish/
Lepomis microlophus	redear sunfish	Springs are good habitat for these common fish, which are called "shellcrackers" because they feed on snails. Fishermen like them because they grow larger than other sunfish. http://www.outdooralabama.com/fishing/freshwater/fish/bream/redear/
Lepomis punctatus	spotted sunfsh	Springs are ideal habitat for this colorful little fish, which likes slow-moving, heavily vegetated streams with limestone, sand, or gravel bottoms. http://www.hrla.com/NCFish/spotted_sunfish.htm
Lucania goodei	bluefin killifish	Springs provide good habitat for this little fish. The males can be very colorful during breeding season, with bright sky-blue dorsal and anal fins. http://www2.stetson.edu/biology/amb/florida.htm
Lutjanus griseus	mangrove snapper	The grey or mangrove snapper is common in spring runs close to the coast. http://www.oceanlight.com/spotlight.php?img=02679
Megalops atlanticus	tarpon	These popular saltwater gamefish often venture upriver into spring systems in the winter and spring. http://www2.stetson.edu/biology/amb/florida.htm
Micropterus notius	suwannee bass	This uncommon gamefish occurs in spring runs, where it prefers fast-moving shoals with a sand-covered limestone bottom. FNAI G3/S3. http://www.fnai.org/FieldGuide/pdf/Micropterus_notius.PDF
Micropterus salmoides	largemouth bass	Fishermen frequently notice this popular gamefish exploring spring runs or hanging out under the shoreline vegetation. They had become scarce in Silver Springs by the early 1940s.. http://www2.stetson.edu/biology/amb/florida.htm

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Morone saxatilis	striped bass	Large numbers of these anadromous fish may invade springs seeking cooler water in summer. Sometimes found in aquatic caves. The native population in the Ocklawaha died out after migration routes were blocked, so that fishery depends on restocking. http://www.flickr.com/photos/reeffishgeek/4909298270/in/photostream/
Mugil cephalus	striped mullet	These common and commercially important saltwater food fish frequently travel upstream into springs in large schools. Their habit of leaping into the air attracts attention. http://www.gooddive.com/diving-photos/show.php?start=15&id=1561
Notemigonus chrysoleucas	golden shiner	Springs are good habitat for this widespread common fish. They travel in schools and are often noticed because their mirror-like scales reflect light. http://www.harpercollege.edu/ls-hs/bio/dept/guide/gallery/fish/original/minnow_golden_shiner_notemigonus_chrysoleucas.jpg
Notropis harperi	redeye chub	This little fish is closely associated with cave and spring habitats. Schools are often seen in the vegetation around spring margins. They are sometimes found in deep isolated aquatic caves and might even breed underground. http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?SpeciesID=595
Notropis petersoni	coastal shiner	Springs are excellent habitat for this little coppery-grey fish, which is one of Florida's most common minnows. The metallic blue stripe down the side makes it look a little like big dull-colored neon tetra. http://www.flmnh.ufl.edu/fish/southflorida/everglades/marshes/glossary/coastalshiner.html
Oreochromis aurea	blue tilapia	EXOTIC. Tilapia is a popular African food fish that has escaped from Florida fish farms. Large schools invade spring runs seeking thermal refuge in winter, then damage the bottom and smother the eggs of bream and bass by digging large nests. http://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/profiles/fish/freshwater/nonnatives/blue-tilapia/
Poecilia latipinna	sailfin molly	These livebearers are well known aquarium fish. They were abundant in Silver Springs before the surrounding marshes were filled. Breeding males can be up to 6 in long with big orangey dorsal fins. Melanistic forms are frequent. http://www2.stetson.edu/biology/amb/florida.htm

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Pomoxis nigromaculatus	black crappie	These heavily black-speckled sunfish are common in a wide variety of aquatic environments, including springs. They are sometimes found in caves. http://www.harpercollege.edu/ls-hs/bio/dept/guide/gallery/fish/original/crappie_black_crappie_pomoxis_nigromaculatus.jpg
Pteronotropis welaka	bluenose shiner	This little bluish fish with long yellow and black fins occurs in a few spring runs around Ocala National Forest, as well as in the Panhandle. It is typically found in deeper pools and holes with lots of vegetation, brush, and debris. FNAI ranked G4/S4. http://www.fnai.org/FieldGuide/pdf/Pteronotropis_welaka.PDF
Pterygoplichthys disjunctivus	vermiculated sailfin catfish	EXOTIC. These armored catfish invade springs and spring runs as thermal refuges. They often annoy manatees by attaching to them to graze on algae. They are sometimes seen draped on or around fallen logs or guarding streambank nest burrows. http://el.erdc.usace.army.mil/elpubs/pdf/ansrp-v09-1.pdf
Sarotherodon melanotheron	blackchin tilapia	EXOTIC. This invasive African cichlid rapidly dominated the fish fauna of Lithia Springs. http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/FactSheet.aspx?speciesID=477
Strongylura marina	atlantic needlefish	These skinny little long-nosed anadromous fish have microscopic scales that make them look silvery. They are related to flying fish and sometimes similarly leap or skitter over the water surface. http://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?SpeciesID=324
Syngnathus scovelli	gulf pipefish	This seahorse relative is primarily a marine species, but there are inland populations in some springs and spring-fed rivers. http://www.aquatic-experts.com/Syngnathus_scovelli.html
Trinectes maculatus	hogchoker	This common marine flounder sometimes travels into inland springs. http://www.nanfa.org/fif/hogchok.shtml