

Pike Killifish

Belonesox belizanus

Order: Cyprinofontiiformes

Family: Poeciliidae

Description: Pike killifish can easily be identified by their long jaws and large teeth. The origin of the dorsal fin is posterior to the origin of the anal fin. Dorsally, they appear dark olive in color, fading to white at the belly. Several rows of black spots are present on their sides and a black spot is present on the tail fin.

Special Features:

- **Feeding** - Pike killifish are ambush predators; they lurk behind plants, roots, and rocks until they strike violently at their prey. Within one day of their birth, young begin feeding on small crustaceans and newborn fish.
- **Size** – Pike killifish are the largest fish in the Poeciliidae family growing to 18 inches total length in Florida.

Range and Habitat: Native to middle America, pike killifish were introduced into a canal in Dade County, Florida in November of 1957, after termination of a research project. Over their native range, pike killifish are found along the banks and in the upper water levels of slow moving fresh water streams, in the brackish waters of mangrove and reed swamps, and around inlets of salty bays. In Florida, pike killifish are typically found in shallow waters rich in vegetation or in mangrove swamps. They are seldom present in open waters.

Reproduction: Pike killifish are live-bearers that breed throughout the year. They are capable of storing sperm for at least 47-56 days, and may produce one brood about every 40 days. Gestation alone takes between 30 and 50 days.

Among mature fish, females are larger than males and significantly more numerous.

Notes:

- **Potential Impacts** - Pike killifish exert strong pressure on small native fish through direct predation.
- **Mosquitoes** – Pike killifish like to eat the native eastern mosquitofish, which are predators on mosquito larvae.
- **Interest to Fisheries** - Pike killifish are of no value as a food fish.
- **Predator or Prey?** – Due to its torpedo-shaped body and preference for swimming near the surface, the pike killifish is often a preferred prey for larger fish.