

# Freshwater Drum

*Aplodinotus grunniens*



The freshwater drum is also known locally as silver bass, sheepshead, and Red River bass. It is often confused with other fish having two dorsal fins, such as white bass and smallmouth bass. To be sure about what you've caught, check the first ray of the anal fin. If it is thick, heavy, and stiff the fish is a freshwater drum; if thin, stiff, and two or more (like those on the spiny dorsal fin) then it is another species.

By the action of muscles connected to the swim bladder the freshwater drum can produce a drumming sound. It is this unique feature that gives this family of fish the name drum.

Freshwater drum are found throughout the drainages of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in southern Manitoba, and the Nelson River in the north. They prefer large bodies of water and can adapt to turbid conditions. Threats to the habitat of freshwater drum include activities that result in siltation and pollution, and barriers to migration.

Spawning takes place when the water temperature becomes quite warm, 21°C. The released eggs float to the surface and drift with the wind and current making it difficult to tell where and when they were spawned. Approximately 25 to 30 hours after the eggs are laid, the young hatch out.

Insects, fish, and crayfish are part of the drum's diet, but by far the largest portion is snails and clams. These are crushed by extremely strong, flat teeth located in the throat.

In Manitoba, freshwater drum are not commercially harvested and they are overlooked by many anglers. Most of those caught are under 5 kg, however they can grow much larger. The Manitoba angling record weighed 11.8 kg.

The rich flesh of the freshwater drum is particularly suited to smoking, although some prefer it poached or fried. Many old time Lake Winnipeg fishermen make excellent fish soup from drum.

**warm water species**