

The mummichog is a very hardy, tolerant species of fish that can withstand changes in temperature and salinity, low oxygen and pollution. It is because of these reasons that in 1973 they became the first fish in space! Our very own mummichog was able to learn how to swim in zero gravity.



Mummichog

Fundulus heteroclitus

Common Names: Mud minnow, gudgeon, Atlantic killifish, mummies

Size: Adults can grow to be 5-6 inches long with females growing larger than males. **Lifespan:** 3 years

Habitat: Because the mummichog so adaptable they can be found in many different habitats. However, estuaries are their habitat of choice—like the Elizabeth River!

Range: For the most part these fish call the Chesapeake Bay their home, but can also be found along the Atlantic coast of North America, from Canada to Mexico.

Diet: Mummichog mostly feed at the surface of the water eating algae and insects. They will also eat small crustaceans, mollusks, eggs of their own species and other fish.

Appearance: They have flattened heads, pointed teeth and mouth that is turned upward which allows them to feed at the surface of the water. Females have a brownish green body with a light, silvery underside, while male are darker with a green or olive body and yellow underside.

Predators: Larger fish, wading birds and seabirds. They also make great bait for fishermen.

Importance: Mummichog live their entire lives within a 50-yard area making their health a direct reflection of their immediate surrounding. This is also referred to as an indicator species. In 2003, the “State of the River” report highlighted a 38% cancer rate among mummichog as the result of a creosote spill in southern branch of the river (Money Point). With the help of ERP and community partners, the “goo” was cleaned up and cancer in the mummichog has been reduced to background levels!

What can you do? Maintaining clean waterways and protecting wetlands is the best way for you to ensure a healthy population of mummichog.

On-Line Resources

<https://www.chesapeakebay.net/discover/field-guide/entry/mummichog>

<https://elizabethriver.org/money-point-revitalization>

<https://elizabethriver.org/not-so-merry-mummichog-curriculum-elizabeth-river-project>



www.elizabethriver.org