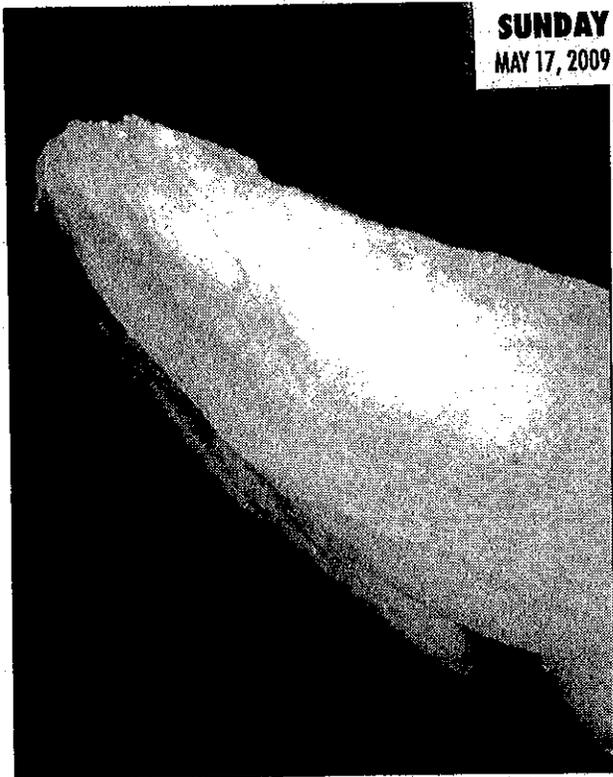


**SUNDAY**  
MAY 17, 2009



Sarah Webb | Special to The Sun

This picture shows the head of the southern cavefish captured in Norfolk Lake.

## Blind cave fish found in northern Ark. lake

BY ALDEMARO ROMERO  
AND MICHEL CONNER  
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

Blind cave fishes are supposed to be found only in caves, but for the first time a blind cave fish has been encountered in an open lake, and it occurred in Arkansas.

On Feb. 20 an individual of the southern cave fish (*Typhlichthys subterraneus*) was collected at Lake Norfolk in Baxter County by Steve Teems. This unique occurrence has surprised scientists. Of the 300 or so species of cave fishes that have been discovered from around the world, this is the first time such a fish has ever been found in open waters.

The southern cavefish is one of the two species of cave fishes found in Arkansas. The other one is the Ozark cavefish found in Northeast Arkansas. This species has been reported for Richardson Cave in Fulton County, a well in Randolph County, and Alexander Cave and Ennis Cave in Stone County. This is the first record of this species for Baxter County.

When the specimen was collected and sent by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to Arkansas State University for identification, it was quickly recognized as a member of the southern cavefish species by its morphological characteristics. Another species of cavefish closely related to the southern cavefish is being described by a national team of scientists led by ASU researchers.

Most cavefish species of the world are considered threatened or vulnerable because they are usually found in a single cave, and their population sizes tend to be small. The southern cavefish seems to be an exception. This species has been found in the subterranean waters of two major areas at both sides of the Mississippi River: in the Ozark Plateau of central and southeastern Missouri and Northeast Arkansas and the Cumberland and Interior Low plateaus of northwest Alabama, northwest Georgia, central Tennessee and Kentucky. Its presence in southern Indiana has been reported but has yet to be confirmed.

Because of its broad distribution it is not surprising that more localities may be reported, but what is really surprising is to find it in open waters.

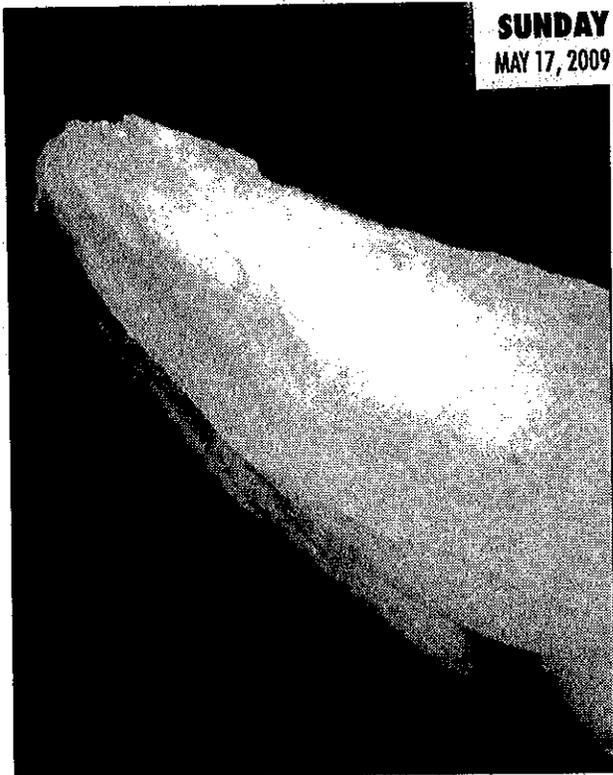
Although some populations of this species have been affected by human activities, the ones in Arkansas seem to be in good condition according to a recent study carried out by ASU researchers.

The specimen from Lake Norfolk has been deposited in the ASU museum collection for possible studies in the future. ASU has the most complete collection of plants and animals of the state and one of the most complete for the Mid-South.

For more information contact the ASU Department of Biological Sciences at [biology@astate.edu](mailto:biology@astate.edu).

Dr. Romero is chairman of biological sciences at ASU, and Conner is a graduate student in the same department.

**SUNDAY**  
MAY 17, 2009



Sarah Webb | Special to The Sun

This picture shows the head of the southern cavefish captured in Norfolk Lake.

## Blind cave fish found in northern Ark. lake

BY ALDEMARO ROMERO  
AND MICHEL CONNER  
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

Blind cave fishes are supposed to be found only in caves, but for the first time a blind cave fish has been encountered in an open lake, and it occurred in Arkansas.

On Feb. 20 an individual of the southern cave fish (*Typhlichthys subterraneus*) was collected at Lake Norfolk in Baxter County by Steve Teems. This unique occurrence has surprised scientists. Of the 300 or so species of cave fishes that have been discovered from around the world, this is the first time such a fish has ever been found in open waters.

The southern cavefish is one of the two species of cave fishes found in Arkansas. The other one is the Ozark cavefish found in Northeast Arkansas. This species has been reported for Richardson Cave in Fulton County, a well in Randolph County, and Alexander Cave and Ennis Cave in Stone County. This is the first record of this species for Baxter County.

When the specimen was collected and sent by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to Arkansas State University for identification, it was quickly recognized as a member of the southern cavefish species by its morphological characteristics. Another species of cavefish closely related to the southern cavefish is being described by a national team of scientists led by ASU researchers.

Most cavefish species of the world are considered threatened or vulnerable because they are usually found in a single cave, and their population sizes tend to be small. The southern cavefish seems to be an exception. This species has been found in the subterranean waters of two major areas at both sides of the Mississippi River: in the Ozark Plateau of central and southeastern Missouri and Northeast Arkansas and the Cumberland and Interior Low plateaus of northwest Alabama, northwest Georgia, central Tennessee and Kentucky. Its presence in southern Indiana has been reported but has yet to be confirmed.

Because of its broad distribution it is not surprising that more localities may be reported, but what is really surprising is to find it in open waters.

Although some populations of this species have been affected by human activities, the ones in Arkansas seem to be in good condition according to a recent study carried out by ASU researchers.

The specimen from Lake Norfolk has been deposited in the ASU museum collection for possible studies in the future. ASU has the most complete collection of plants and animals of the state and one of the most complete for the Mid-South.

For more information contact the ASU Department of Biological Sciences at [biology@astate.edu](mailto:biology@astate.edu).

Dr. Romero is chairman of biological sciences at ASU, and Conner is a graduate student in the same department.