

# Outdoor Recreation

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# Outdoor Education

## Learning About New Mexico's Wildlife Longnose Gar

### **Longnose gar (*Lepisosteus osseus*)**

What's in a name? Longnose gar says a lot about this seemingly Pinnocchio-nosed fish. The scientific name, *Lepisosteus* is Greek, meaning "bony scale," and *osseus* is Latin, meaning "of bone." Other names commonly used for this primitive pike-like fish are needlenose gar, billfish and billy gar.

The longnose gar appears to have a long nose. It has a long, narrow jaw, and the snout is three times as long as the head behind the eyes. This gar can measure 5.0 feet (1.8 meters) long and weigh as much as 16.6 pounds (7.5 kilograms). Most gars are no bigger than 24 inches long and 2 pounds. The largest longnose gar taken in New Mexico by an angler was caught in the Pecos River. It was 39 1/4 inches long and weighed 12 pounds 8 ounces.

The floor of the gar's mouth is flexible, and the jaw arches can be bent to such a degree that even a large fish with a high back can be swallowed. The lower part of the head resembles the sack of a pelican that has just swallowed a fish.



New Mexico Department of Game and Fish

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