

Complete Guide to Fish Printing (Gyotaku Demonstrated)



Before the invention of cameras, Japanese anglers recorded large or unusual specimens by making inked reproductions of their catch, a practice called [Gyotaku](#). Both natural history and art museums often have [collections of fish prints](#). Now you can have your students create beautiful Gyotaku prints in the classroom, nature center, or at home. All you need is ink, a brayer, paper, and soft fish replicas.

In addition to being fun, fish printing is a perfect way to combine science, art, mathematics, reading, and writing. Students can discuss diversity and anatomy, create beautiful art prints, determine math ratios by measuring fins or counting fin rays, read and write stories, or create poems about fish. Fish printing can be easily blended into lessons that follow Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and reflect STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) learning.

Did you know that there is an entire society dedicated to advancing the field of nature printing, including fish printing? Here is the link to [The Nature Printing Society!](#)

Gyotaku fish printing supplies along with other hands-on art printing supplies and resources can be found [here](#).

10 Easy Steps for Creating Beautiful Fish Prints

1. Select a smooth surface to work on that can be wiped off easily or covered with Kraft paper or newspaper.
2. Squeeze a small "toothbrush" amount of [ink](#) onto a paper or plastic plate.
3. Roll a [brayer](#) (roller) in several directions over the ink.
4. Roll the brayer over the fish replica.
5. Provide even coverage to the entire replica surface, not too thick or thin. You can also hand paint the scales with different colors of ink for multi-color fish prints.
6. Lift the fish replica up and place it on clean paper.

7. Either lay your printing paper over the top of the fish and gently press down, or place the printing paper on the table, turn the fish upside down, and press it down against the paper. Experiment with both techniques to see which works best for you.
8. In either case, do not slide or move the position of the printing paper until you are finished.
9. Gently lift the printing paper off the fish (or your fish off the paper) and place the print on a clean surface to dry.
10. Clean the fish replicas with warm soapy water and set out to dry.

Fish Printing Video [Tutorial]

In this fish printing lesson, an art teacher demonstrates just how easy it is to create beautiful Gyo-taku fish prints. To view this tutorial, simply click the image below or [click here](#).



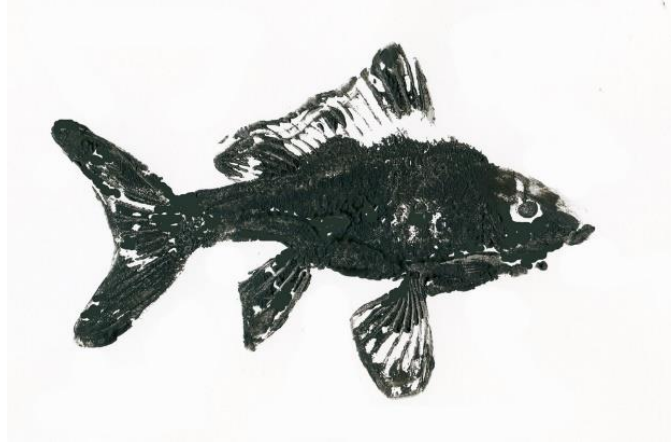
3 Easy to Use Fish Printing Kits [Introductory, Freshwater, Saltwater]

For those unsure which fish to select, Acorn Naturalists offers three fish printing kits that take out the guesswork and include everything needed to get started with fish printing: an [introductory fish printing kit](#), a [freshwater fish printing kit](#), and a [saltwater fish printing kit](#). These kits come with a fish printing booklet that includes discussions on fish printing techniques, fish descriptions, and hands-on activities.

16 Block Printing Inks for Creating Beautiful Fish Printing [Washable]

Printer or block inks produce the best fish prints. This is because they have the perfect "stickiness" characteristics needed to capture the fine detail of scales, fins, and eyes on fish replicas used for fish printing. The best inks to use with students are block inks that are water

soluble, making cleanup easy with just soap and water. [Block fish printing inks](#) are available in a wide range of colors and in both individual and classroom tube sizes.

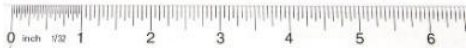


10 Best Freshwater Fish Printing Replicas [Soft Fish Replicas]

All of the fish species described below have been specifically selected for their fish printing qualities and are available in "soft" form (the best replicas for fish printing are made from soft, flexible material that has the "squishy" feel of a real fish, your basic soft rubber fish but without any latex). Fish replicas that are hard do not produce fish prints that are as realistic looking as those created with [soft fish replicas](#). Soft fish replicas are easily cleaned with warm soapy water.



BLUEGILL. A member of the sunfish family, bluegill can grow to several pounds and reach a length of 9-13 inches. Bluegill feed on small fish, insects, crustaceans, and worms. They tend to be very territorial, especially during breeding season. Young bluegill are consumed by bass and other fish, as well as snakes, birds, and mammals. Native throughout North America, this species has been introduced widely throughout the world where it is often used as both a game and food fish. Bluegill fish replicas are available as both [young bluegill](#) and [adult bluegill](#).



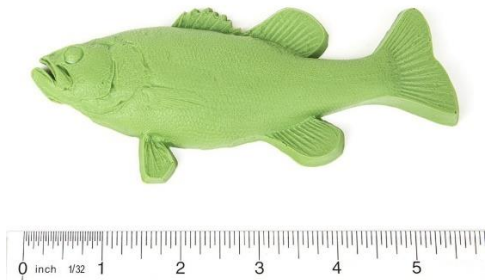
CARP. Found in freshwater environments, carp range in size from inches to giants weighing up to 100 pounds. Omnivorous feeders, they consume plants, algae, snails, worms, insect larvae, shrimp, mussels, and many other organisms. The common goldfish is a carp, as is koi which have been bred and kept as pets for centuries. Records show that carp were farmed for food in Asia as early as 400 B.C. E., and to this day serve as an important source of food in many countries. Carp grow slowly over time and have been known to live for over 100 years. Those found in North America are introduced and considered an invasive species. Carp fish replicas are available as both [young carp](#) and [adult carp](#).



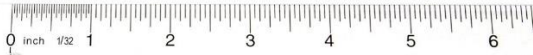
DRUM. Found throughout North America in lakes and rivers, the drum is named from the drumming sound males make with their air bladders and surrounding muscle tissue. This sound often puzzles lake and river divers when they hear it for the first time. Drums can reach up to 25 pounds, with most averaging several pounds. Although thought of as a freshwater fish, drums occasionally move through estuaries into marine environments. Drum fish replicas are available [here](#).



GREEN SUNFISH. Green sunfish can grow to over a pound and reach a length of 9-11 inches. Feeding on small fish, insects, crustaceans and worms, they are very territorial, especially during breeding season. Young sunfish are consumed by bass and other fish, as well as snakes, birds and mammals. Green sunfish are native to North America east of the Rocky Mountains and from Canada's Hudson Bay Basin to the Gulf Coast of the United States and northern Mexico. Sunfish replicas are available [here](#).



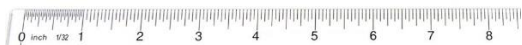
LARGEMOUTH BASS. Members of the sunfish family, largemouth bass are common in freshwater lakes throughout North America. They feed largely on fish, crayfish, and insect larvae, but their aggressive behavior causes them to strike at anything. Largemouth bass have even been known to eat young ducklings. If one includes all gear used to fish for bass, anglers spend more money on largemouth bass fishing every year than all the money spent on golf and tennis combined! Bass fish replicas are available as both [young bass](#) and [adult bass](#).



NORTHERN PIKE. This voracious predator occurs in brackish and freshwater systems in North America. Its alternate name, water wolf, relates to its very aggressive hunting style. When introduced into lakes where it is not native, this fish can literally exterminate local fish populations, hence recent efforts to prevent unwanted introductions. Pike can reach 3-4 feet and weigh up to 55 pounds. Pike fish replicas are available as both [young pike](#) and [adult pike](#).



PERCH (Lake). One of the most common species of fish found throughout North America, yellow perch live in freshwater lakes and rivers. They feed on insects, small fish, and crustaceans. Averaging a foot in length and weighing several pounds, they are commonly found in fish markets. Lake perch also serve as an important food source for larger fish. Lake perch replicas are available [here](#).



SALMON. Beginning their life in freshwater streams and rivers, salmon migrate to the sea to mature and eventually return to their birthplace to spawn. Known for their voracious appetites, they feed on smaller fish, as well as squid and other invertebrates. Salmon have been used extensively as a food source by humans for thousands of years. Habitat loss (destruction of

spawning streams), overharvesting, and interbreeding with hatchery stock have all contributed to the decline of wild salmon populations. Salmon fish replicas are available as both [young salmon](#) and [adult salmon](#).



TROUT. Trout are probably one of the best-known North American freshwater fish. They live in cool, clean streams, although several species live in the ocean and spawn in freshwater environments, like salmon. The largest trout grow to over 50 pounds, and all species are predatory on smaller fish and insects. With the increasing popularity of catch and release trout fishing, many streams once again have large breeding specimens that spawn to help replenish local trout populations. Trout fish replicas are available as both [young trout](#) and [adult trout](#).

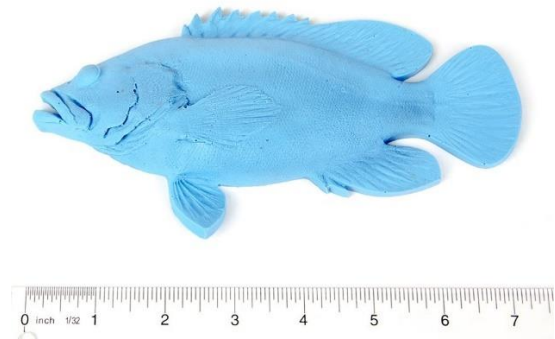


WALLEYE. Found throughout North America, this species is named for its large glassy eyes which glow at night in the light, much like cat eyes do. The walleye is the largest species of North American perch, reaching a weight of 25 pounds. Prized by anglers, this species is highly aggressive, streamlined, and fast. It makes a beautiful, well-defined print. Walleye fish replicas are available [here](#).

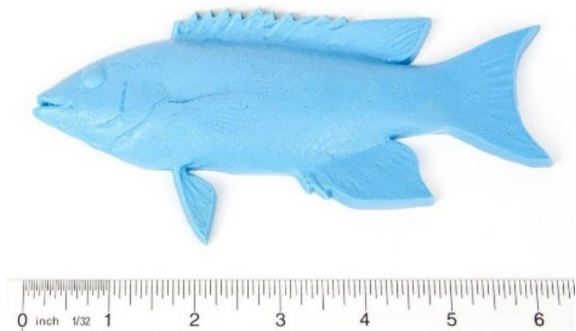
9 Best Saltwater Fish Replicas for Fish Printing [Soft Fish Replicas]



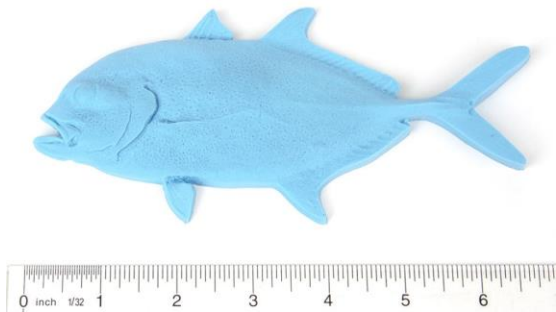
FLOUNDER. Found throughout the world's oceans, flounder are members of the flatfish family that contains over 500 different species. When young, all flatfish swim about in a normal fashion. Later, as they mature, they spend more time on the bottom; eventually their bodies become asymmetrical. The submerged eye literally migrates to the exposed side so that both eyes face up on one side of their body! Flounder blend into their surroundings, lying motionless on the sand until a small fish or crustacean comes by. They then move with amazing speed. Flounder are commonly found near the mouths of estuaries where they prey on small fish that move in and out with the tides. Flounder fish replicas are available [here](#).



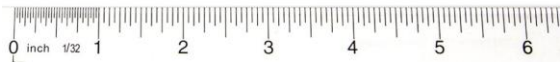
GROUPEL. With a stout body, grouper are not built for long-distance swimming in open water. Rather, they lie in wait near rocky ledges, their mouth and gills forming a powerful sucking system that pulls prey in from a distance. They swallow their prey whole—the menu includes fish, octopus, crab, and lobster. Grouper fish replicas are available [here](#).



HOGFISH. Hogfish feed on small fish, shellfish, and crustaceans, and are often found in and around reef environments. Some of the larger varieties are occasionally caught on fish lines, but are generally released since most species are not considered "good eating." Hogfish replicas are available [here](#).



JACK. Members of this group of fish are found in both tropical and temperate waters of North America and Mexico. Jacks show diverse morphology, from streamlined, fast-swimming bodies to laterally compressed, slow-moving bodies. This replica is of a small yellow jack. Yellow jack are found from New England to Florida and south to the Bahamas, Caribbean Sea, and Brazil. Young jack are sometimes found foraging in sandy shallows near reefs, either as solitary fish or members of a small school. Jack fish replicas are available [here](#).



OPALEYE PERCH. Opaleye are heavy-bodied saltwater perch, olive green or gray green in color with two light spots at the base of the dorsal fin. Averaging under a foot in length, these fish typically spend their first two years in tidepools before venturing out to subtidal reefs and kelp beds in Pacific waters off California and Mexico. Opaleye feed on small invertebrates, jellies, and even algae. Opaleye fish replicas are available [here](#).



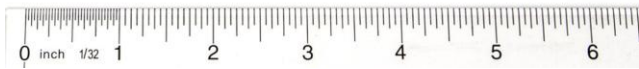
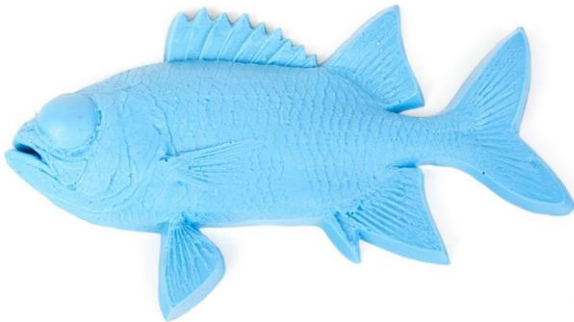
SALMON. Beginning their life in freshwater streams and rivers, salmon migrate to the sea to mature and eventually return to their birthplace to spawn. Known for their voracious appetites, they feed on smaller fish, as well as squid and other invertebrates. Salmon have been used extensively as a food source by humans for thousands of years. Habitat loss (destruction of spawning streams), overharvesting, and interbreeding with hatchery stock have all contributed to the decline of wild salmon populations. Salmon fish replicas are available as both [young salmon](#) and [adult salmon](#).



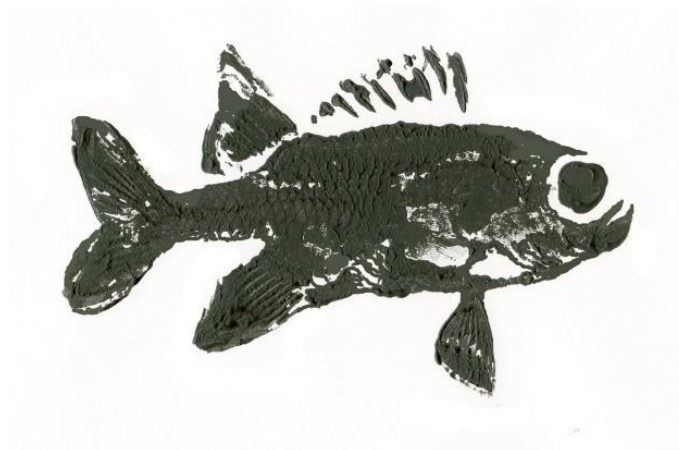
SEA STAR (STARFISH). Sea stars come in a variety of sizes and shapes—from webbed bat stars to “stringy” brittle stars. Some stars are very small, while others exceed a diameter of several feet. A majority prey on shellfish, such as mussels and oysters whose shells are pried open with the sea star’s suction-like tube feet. The sea star literally turns its stomach inside out and digests the food from within the shell, absorbing nutrients and then sucking its stomach back inside before moving on to its next meal. The textured surface of this animal makes for a beautiful and bizarre print. Sea Star replicas are available [here](#).



SKATE. A member of the ray family, skates inhabit shallow to deep bottom waters throughout the world and can reach a length of six feet. Their empty egg cases often wash up on beaches—their shape earning them the nickname of “mermaid’s purse.” Skates are opportunistic feeders, consuming both live and dead fish, crustaceans, and mollusks. In certain countries they are consumed for food, although they are not fished commercially in North American waters. Skate replicas are available [here](#).



SQUIRRELFISH. Named for their large squirrel-like eyes, squirrelfish are ray-finned fish. Multiple sharp, spiny rays appear before their dorsal fins, as well as in their pelvic fins. These brightly colored fish are nocturnal, hiding in crevices during the day and foraging for invertebrates and small fish along reefs during the night. They are found in tropical parts of the Indian, Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, with the greatest species diversity concentrated near reefs in the Indo-Pacific. Squirrelfish replicas are available [here](#).



Acorn Naturalists
New Resources for the Trail and Classroom®
www.acornnaturalists.com
(800) 422-8886