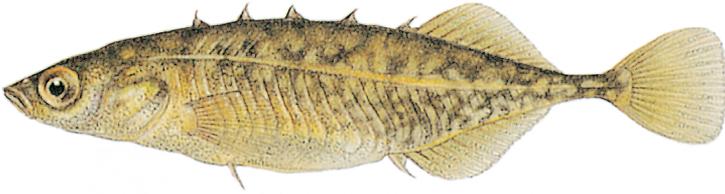


STICKLEBACKS (family Gasterosteidae)

Brook stickleback

Culaea inconstans



Similar Species: None in South Dakota

Identification: Five small, isolated spines on back.

Brook sticklebacks are found in cold, clear to slightly turbid streams, spring-fed ponds, and the shallow edges of lakes in eastern South Dakota. In spring, the male brook stickleback builds a globular nest of dead grass, algae, and other plant material, which he binds together with a “waterproof glue” that he secretes from his kidneys. The male coaxes a female into the nest, where she deposits eggs and abandons the nest. The male fertilizes the eggs and then stays nearby to defend his territory, typically positioning himself in front of the nest opening and aerating the eggs by fanning his fins. The male remains vigilant after the eggs hatch and retrieves any larvae that stray from the nest. Within several days, the young leave the nest faster than the male can retrieve them and the male then abandons the nest. Sticklebacks are small fish, averaging about 2 to 3 inches as adults.

