



State Fish Concept

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INTRODUCTION

India is a country blessed with immense aquatic biodiversity from the mighty Ganges to the serene backwaters of Kerala and from Himalayan streams to coastal estuaries. Fish are not only a vital part of our ecosystems but are also deeply woven into the cultural, culinary and economic fabric of many Indian states, while we proudly celebrate state symbols like animals, birds and flowers. The concept of a state fish is still emerging idea that holds significant potential. Recognizing official state fish species can help raise awareness about local ecosystems, support conservation efforts and honour the deep-rooted relationship between communities and aquatic life. It can also highlight traditional livelihoods and promote the sustainable use of our precious water resources.

Why Designate a State Fish

The state fish designation serves several purposes:

- i. Educational Value: Teaching children and residents about local ecosystems and aquatic life.
- ii. Conservation Awareness: Highlighting species that may be threatened or require habitat protection.
- iii. Cultural Recognition: Celebrating the role of fishing in local economies and traditions.
- iv. Tourism and Recreation: Promoting fishing destinations and outdoor activities.

What Is the State Fish Concept

The state fish concept refers to the formal identification of a particular fish species as the symbolic representative of a state. Just as we have state birds and trees, state fish can highlight species that are ecologically important, culturally significant or economically valuable to the region. While a few Indian states have begun to adopt official state fish (e.g., West Bengal Hilsa fish), there's great opportunity for others to follow suit especially considering India's vast river systems and marine biodiversity (ICAR–NBFG, 2023).

State Fishes of India

In 2006, the ICAR–National Bureau of Fish Genetic Resources (ICAR-NBFGR) situated in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh identified and compiled a list of State Fish for 16 states across India (Bano *et al.*, 2025). This effort was designed to involve important stakeholders in a unified conservation strategy. Through this collaboration the participating states joined hands with ICAR-

NBFGR to create and implement effective plans for protecting and improving the populations of their chosen state fish species with the broader goal of supporting real-time conservation of biodiversity. The main purpose of assigning a State Fish is to allow each state to formally recognize a specific fish species and take active responsibility for preserving its aquatic biodiversity (CIFRI, 2022).

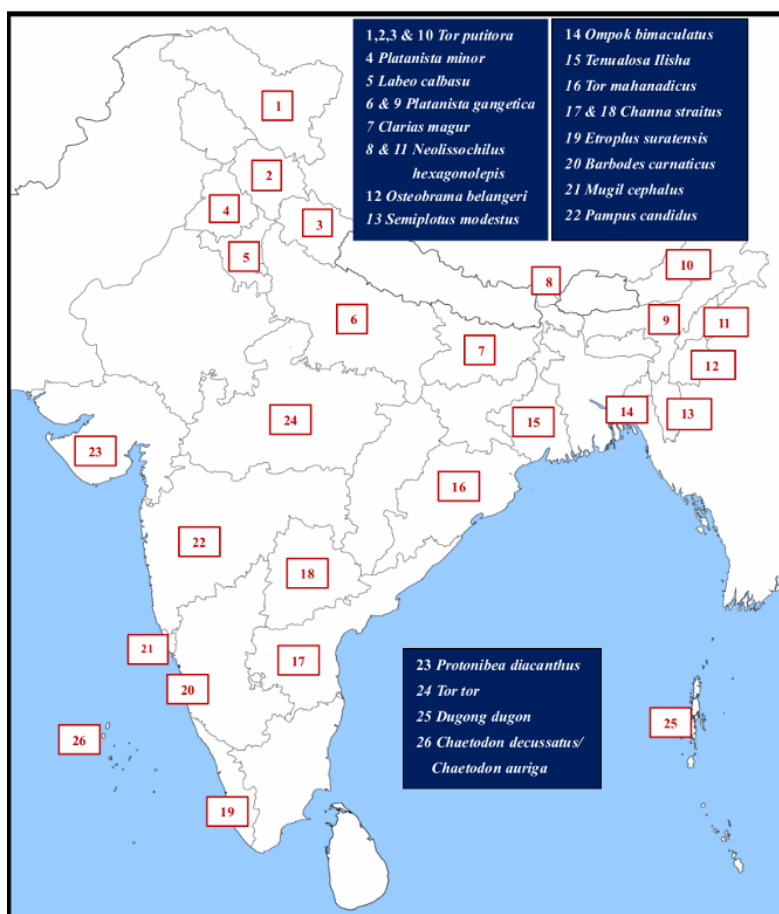


Fig. State Fishes and Aquatic Animals of India (As on 2023)

Table: List of state fishes/state animals/ state aquatic animals of India (As on 2023)

S. No.	States	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Jammu & Kashmir	Golden Mahseer	<i>Tor putitora</i>
2	Himachal Pradesh	Golden Mahseer	<i>Tor putitora</i>
3	Uttarakhand	Golden Mahseer	<i>Tor putitora</i>
4	Punjab	Indus River dolphin (State aquatic animal)	<i>Platanista minor</i>
5	Haryana	Kalbasu/ Calabasu/ Orange fin lebeo	<i>Labeo calbasu</i>
6	Uttar Pradesh	Indian featherback/ Chital (State fish)	<i>Chitala chitala</i>
		Ganges River dolphin (State aquatic animal)	<i>Platanista gangetica</i>

7	Bihar	Magur/Indian walking catfish	<i>Clarias magur</i> (Previously recorded as <i>Clarias batrachus</i>)
8	Sikkim	Copper/ Chocolate mahseer	<i>Neolissochilus hexagonolepis</i>
9	Assam	Ganges River dolphin (State aquatic animal)	<i>Platanista gangetica</i>
10	Arunachal Pradesh	Golden Mahseer	<i>Tor putitora</i>
11	Nagaland	Copper/Chocolate Mahseer	<i>Neolissochilus hexagonolepis</i>
12	Manipur	Pengba	<i>Osteobrama belangeri</i>
13	Mizoram	Ngahvang/ Burmese Kingfish	<i>Semiplotus modestus</i>
14	Tripura	Pabda/Indian Butter catfish	<i>Ompok bimaculatus</i>
15	West Bengal	Hilsa	<i>Tenualosa ilisha</i>
16	Odisha	Mahanadi Mahseer	<i>Tor mahanadicus</i>
17	Andhra Pradesh	Striped Murrel	<i>Channa straitus</i>
18	Telangana	Striped Murrel	<i>Channa straitus</i>
19	Kerala	Karimeen/Pearlspot	<i>Etroplus suratensis</i>
20	Karnataka	Carnatic Carp	<i>Barbodes carnaticus</i> (Previously recorded as <i>Puntius carnaticus</i>)
21	Goa	Striped grey mullet	<i>Mugil cephalus</i>
22	Maharashtra	Silver pomfret	<i>Pampus candidus</i> (Previously recorded as <i>Pampus argenteus</i>)
23	Gujarat	Blackspotted croaker	<i>Protonibea diacanthus</i>
24	Madhya Pradesh	Narmada mahseer	<i>Tor tor</i>
25	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Dugong (State animal)	<i>Dugong dugon</i>
26	Lakshadweep	Threadfin Butterflyfish (State animal)	<i>Chaetodon decussatus/Chaetodon auriga</i>

CONCLUSION

The concept of a state fish holds significant value for a country like India, where aquatic biodiversity is both vast and deeply connected to local cultures and livelihoods. Recognizing an official state fish can serve as a meaningful step toward increasing public awareness about local ecosystems and the importance of conserving aquatic species. It also highlights the traditional roles of fish in regional economies, cuisines and communities. By formally identifying and celebrating state fish, Indian states can strengthen conservation efforts, support sustainable fisheries and promote education about aquatic life. The initiative led by ICAR–NBFGR in identifying state fishes for several states shows how such recognition can be integrated into broader biodiversity strategies. The state fish concept across all Indian states can help protect aquatic biodiversity while honouring the enduring relationship between people and water.

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