

Nine-spined Stickleback

Pungitius pungitius

Fish · Here all year · spawns Apr-Jul



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A smaller, more slender stickleback with seven to eleven short spines along the back — usually nine — a very narrow tail stalk and a mottled olive-brown colour. Breeding males turn dark, almost black, with white pelvic spines, rather than developing the red throat of the three-spined. It favours weedy, well-vegetated ditches, ponds and slow, silty water around Dumfries.

BEHAVIOUR

Nine-spined sticklebacks are more secretive than the three-spined and keep to dense vegetation, which is where they build their nests — the male constructs a tunnel of plant material suspended among weed stems, rather than on the bottom, and guards it alone. They tolerate low oxygen and brackish water well, and often persist in ditches and ponds where few other fish can live.

WHEN TO SEE IT

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QUICK FACTS

FAMILY	Sticklebacks (Gasterosteidae)
SIZE	Typically 4-6 cm
UK STATUS	Native; local and patchy, favouring weedy ditches

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