

## Three-spined Stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*)

Size: 5-8cm (in freshwater)

**Carnivore** – Feeds on worms, crustaceans, aquatic insects and small fish. Also known to eat their own fry and eggs.

Breathes using gills. Water taken into mouth and forced over filaments with large surface area to maximise diffusion.



During spawning season, males have a metallic sheen, bright blue eyes and orange/red bellies. They build hollow nests with plant material (only British freshwater fish to do this) and encourage females to lay eggs by performing a zig-zag courtship dance. Males guard eggs and fan them to provide them with oxygen. Has bony plates instead of scales. Raises spines if eaten by larger fish. Can tolerate brackish water.