

# Smart Stuff

with Twig Walkingstick

## Q. Dear Twig: Can fish talk? Make sounds? Bloop? Bleep?

A. Not counting Nemo and Dory and friends (and Mr. Limpet) (and Rainbow Fish), fish can't talk like you and I talk.

But some fish actually do make noises meant for other fish to hear. The noises sound like **clicks** or **ticks** or **grunts** or even **whistles**.

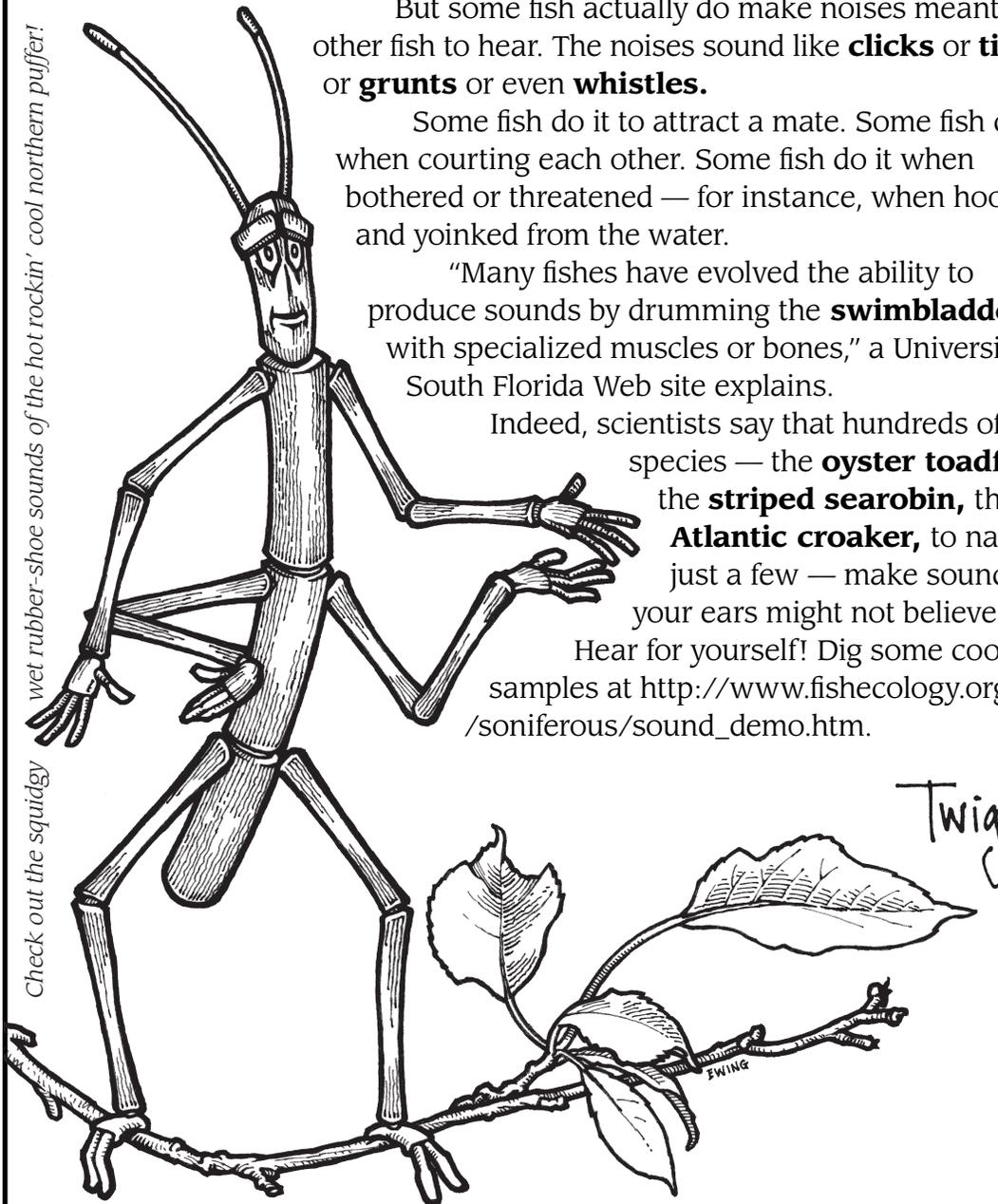
Some fish do it to attract a mate. Some fish do it when courting each other. Some fish do it when bothered or threatened — for instance, when hooked and yanked from the water.

"Many fishes have evolved the ability to produce sounds by drumming the **swimbladder** with specialized muscles or bones," a University of South Florida Web site explains.

Indeed, scientists say that hundreds of species — the **oyster toadfish**, the **striped searobin**, the **Atlantic croaker**, to name just a few — make sounds your ears might not believe.

Hear for yourself! Dig some cool samples at [http://www.fishecology.org/soniferous/sound\\_demo.htm](http://www.fishecology.org/soniferous/sound_demo.htm).

Check out the squiddy wet rubber-shoe sounds of the hot rockin' cool northern puffer!



From your scientific friends at The Ohio State University — specifically, the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center ([www.oardc.ohio-state.edu](http://www.oardc.ohio-state.edu)) and OSU Extension ([extension.osu.edu](http://extension.osu.edu)).



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION

OHIO AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH  
AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

For the week of  
July 8, 2007

By Kurt Knebusch  
(330) 263-3776  
knebusch.1@osu.edu

**Notes:** The Web site mentioned is by an adjunct assistant professor with the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Rodney Rountree. Also check out his amazing assortment of recorded fish groans, moans, honks and mystery (oo!) noises at <http://www.fishecology.org/soniferous/justsounds.htm>. Find the University of South Florida Web site, which has sound samples, too, at [http://www.marine.usf.edu/bio/fishlab/fish\\_sound\\_production.htm](http://www.marine.usf.edu/bio/fishlab/fish_sound_production.htm). If you're really into fish sounds now — and who wouldn't be? — there's even a "Fish Sounds" CD you can buy. Read about it at <http://www.gso.uri.edu/fishsounds/Notice.html>.

### Section of Communications and Technology

2021 Coffey Road  
Columbus, OH 43210-1044  
(614) 292-2011

208 Research Services Bldg.  
1680 Madison Ave.  
Wooster, OH 44691-4096  
(330) 263-3780

OSU Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all educational programs conducted by Ohio State University Extension are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, age, gender identity or expression, disability, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, or veteran status. Keith L. Smith, Associate Vice President, Agricultural Administration and Director, OSU Extension. TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868