Underwater Lake Tahoe Scavenger Hunt

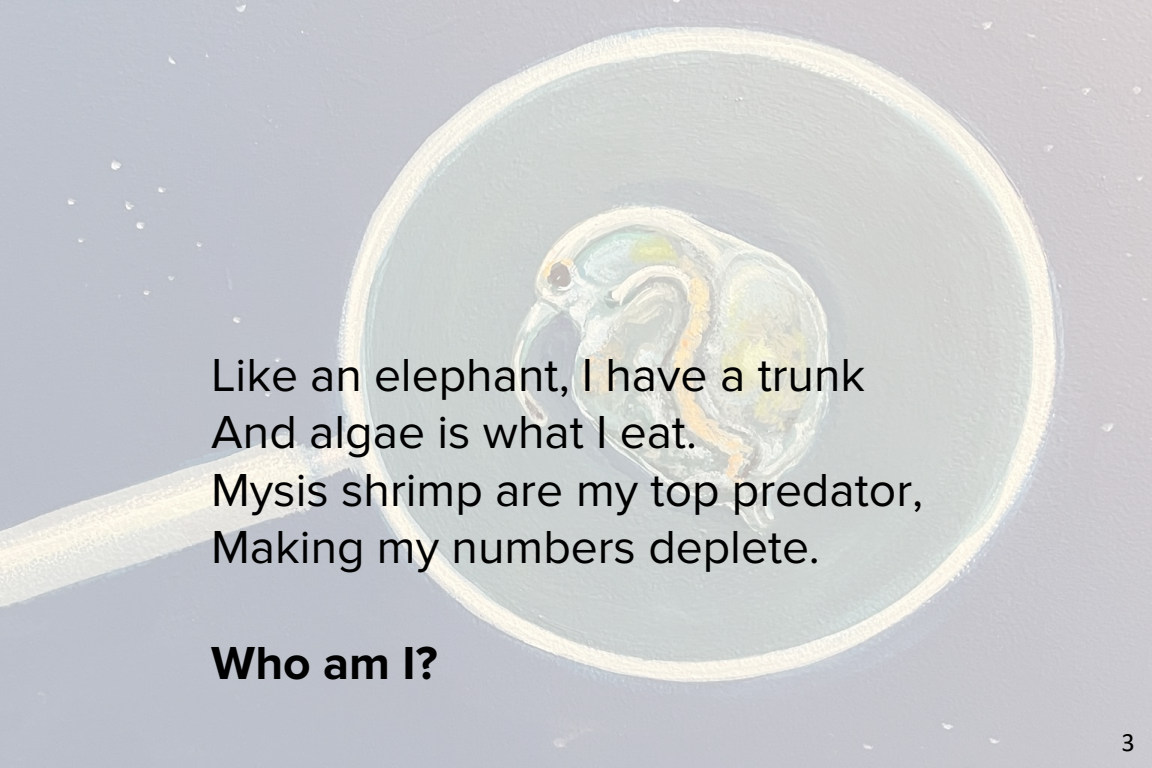
Can you find each of these organisms on the mural?
Use the image and clues to find each species that lives in and around Lake Tahoe.

UCDAVIS
Tahoe Environmental
Research Center

Underwater Lake Tahoe Scavenger Hunt

Developed by the TERC Education Team 2022:

Samantha Campisi
Jesse Landesman
Heather Segale
Noah Shapiro
Alison Toy
Grace Weber

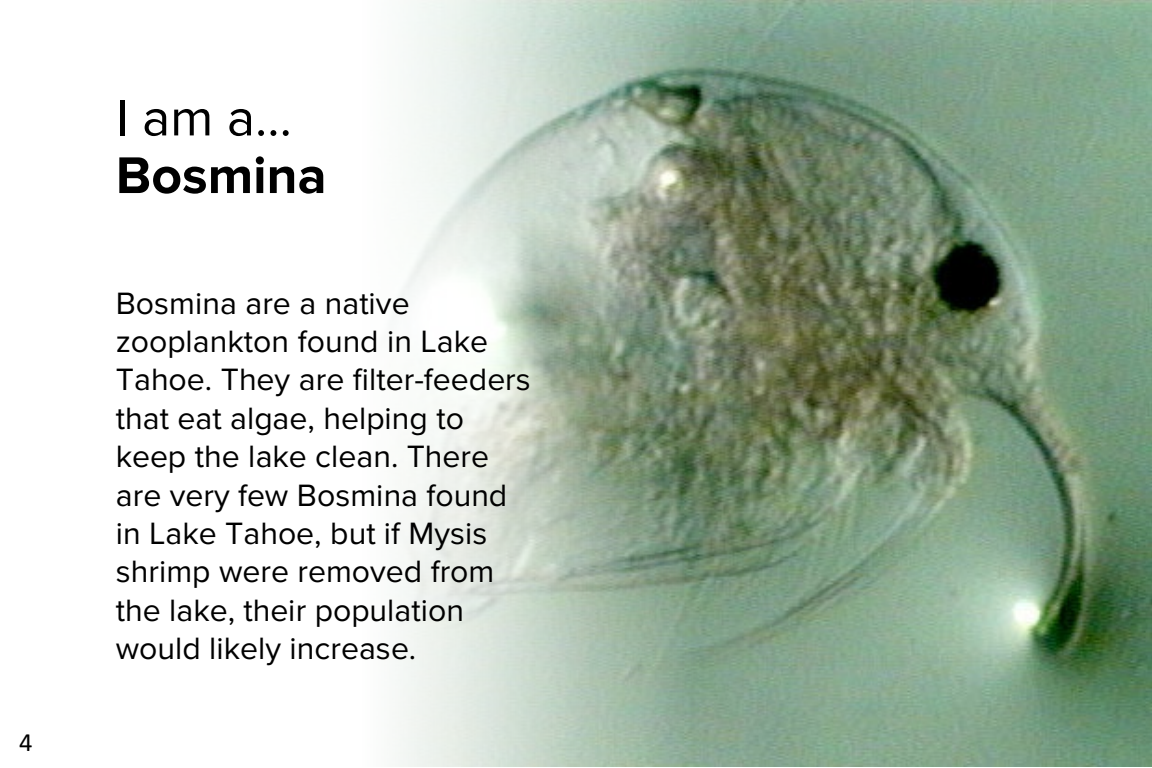


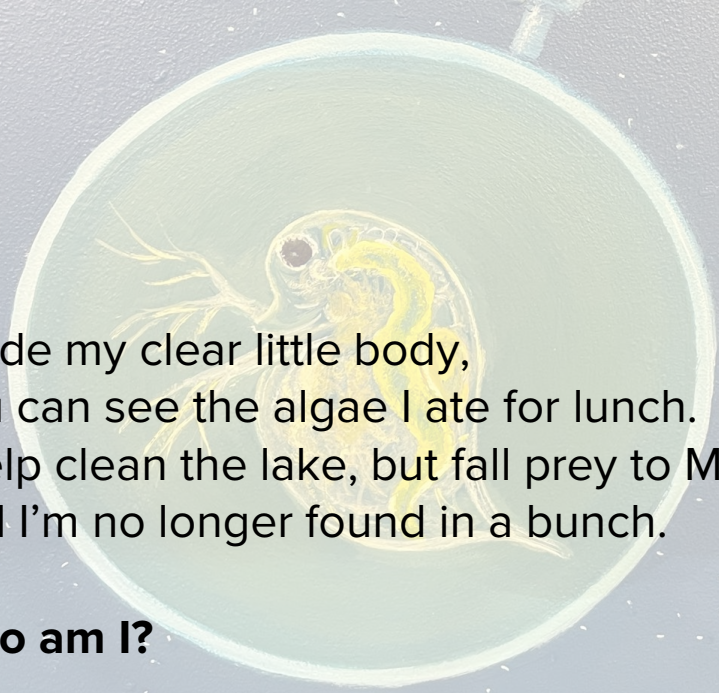
Like an elephant, I have a trunk
And algae is what I eat.
Mysis shrimp are my top predator,
Making my numbers deplete.

Who am I?

I am a...
Bosmina

Bosmina are a native zooplankton found in Lake Tahoe. They are filter-feeders that eat algae, helping to keep the lake clean. There are very few Bosmina found in Lake Tahoe, but if Mysis shrimp were removed from the lake, their population would likely increase.



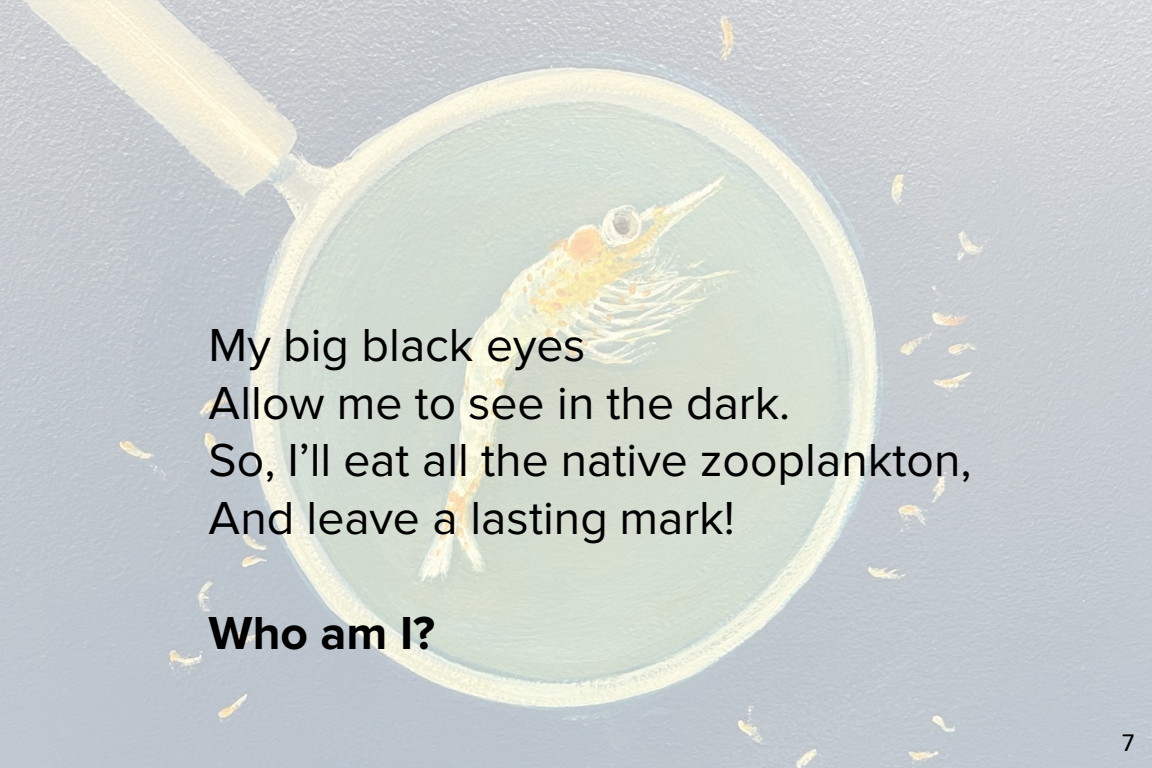


Inside my clear little body,
you can see the algae I ate for lunch.
I help clean the lake, but fall prey to Mysis,
and I'm no longer found in a bunch.

Who am I?

I am a...
Daphnia

Daphnia are native zooplankton found in Lake Tahoe that are decreasing in population because of the introduction of Mysis shrimp into Lake Tahoe. They have a clear carapace, or exoskeleton, which allows us to see the algae or sediment inside their intestine.

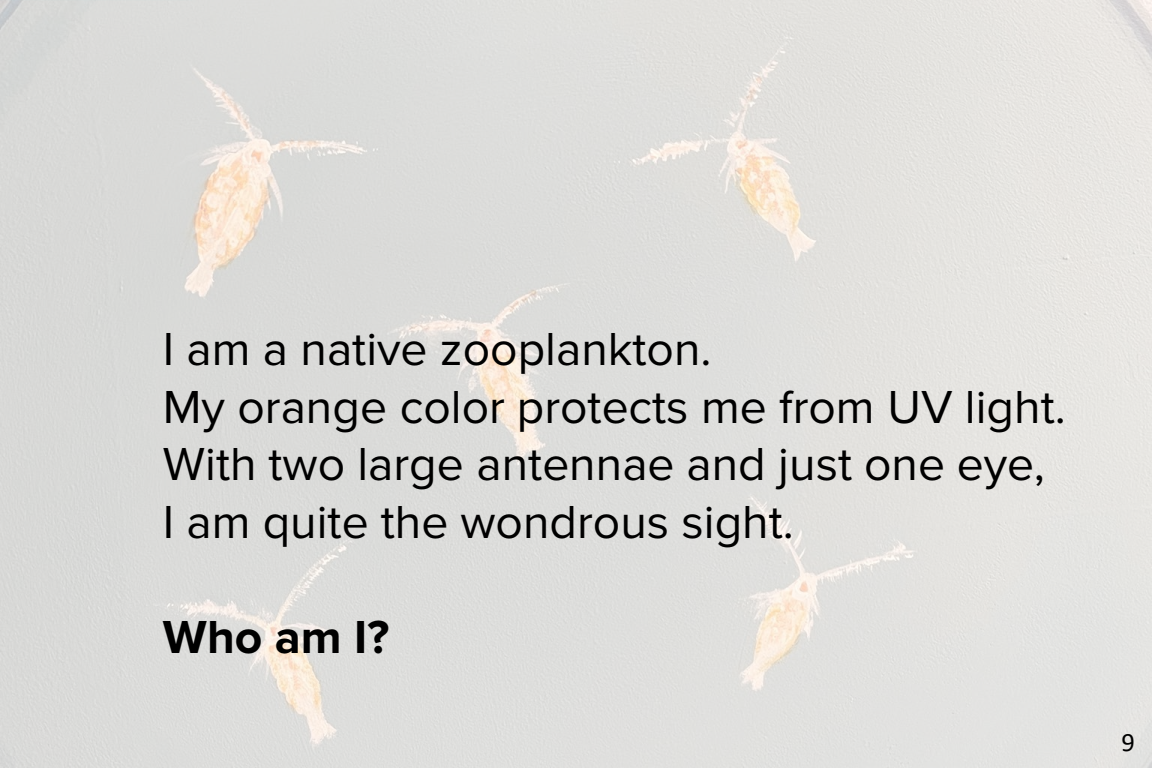


My big black eyes
Allow me to see in the dark.
So, I'll eat all the native zooplankton,
And leave a lasting mark!

Who am I?

I am a...
Mysis shrimp

Non-native Mysis shrimp were originally added as a food source for fish. However, using their large, black eyes, they move away from the sunlight into the dark depths of the lake to avoid being eaten. During the night, they swim up to shallower waters and eat the native zooplankton, effectively reducing the available food for fish.

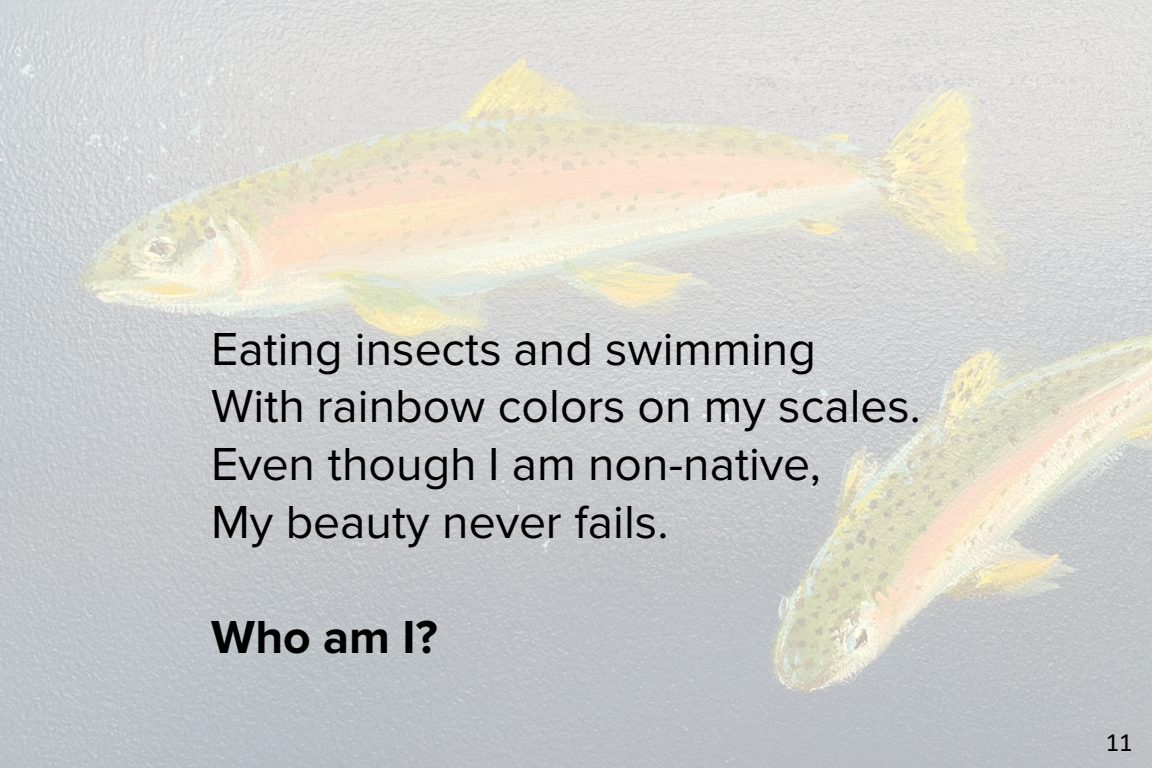


I am a native zooplankton.
My orange color protects me from UV light.
With two large antennae and just one eye,
I am quite the wondrous sight.

Who am I?

I am a...
Copepod

Copepods are another native zooplankton found in Lake Tahoe. There are two types of copepods in Lake Tahoe, including Diaptomus, which is orange in color, and Epischura, which is gray.

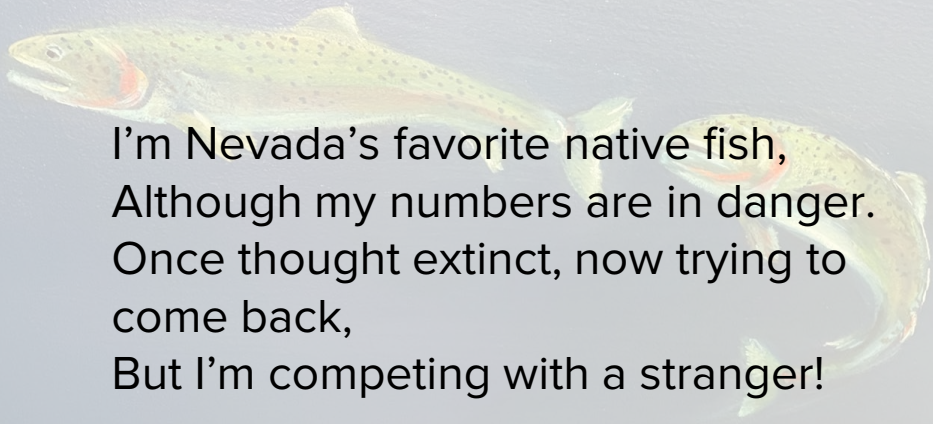


Eating insects and swimming
With rainbow colors on my scales.
Even though I am non-native,
My beauty never fails.

Who am I?

I am a...
Rainbow trout

Rainbow trout is a non-native species of fish that was introduced into Lake Tahoe in the late 1800s. Rainbow trout are mainly found in shallower waters of Lake Tahoe. They are colorful, with a pinkish stripe and black dots.

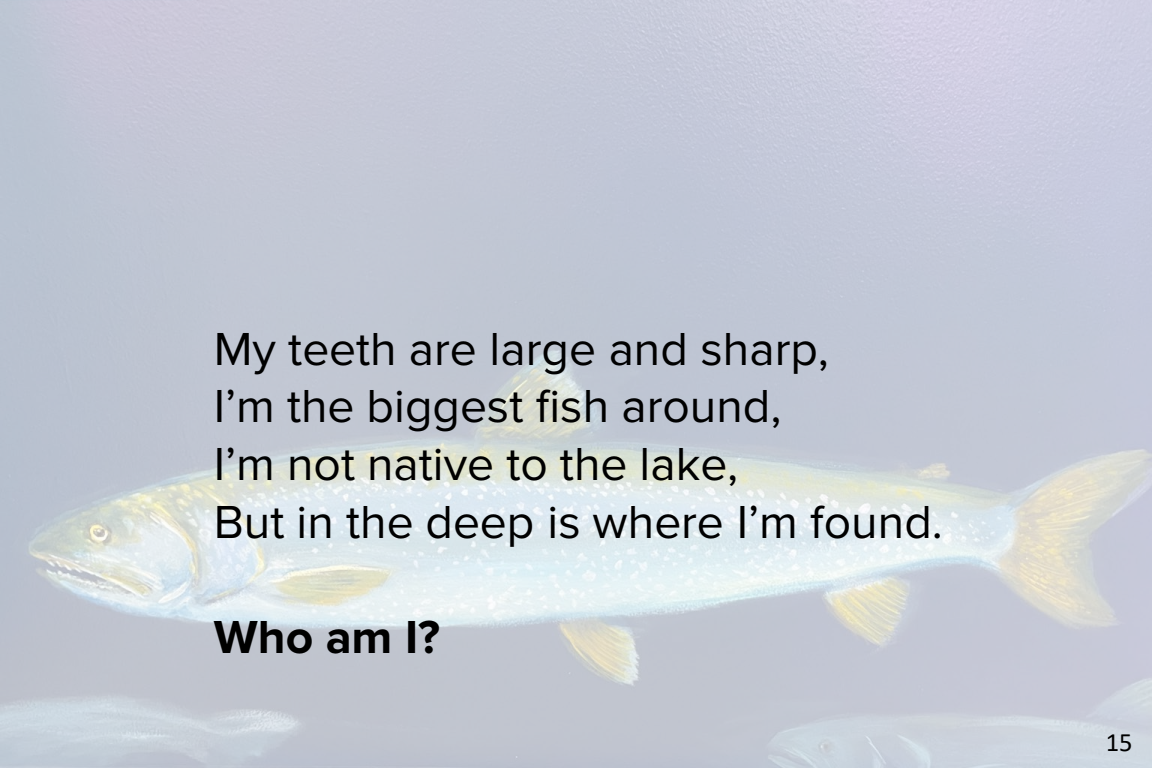


I’m Nevada’s favorite native fish,
Although my numbers are in danger.
Once thought extinct, now trying to come back,
But I’m competing with a stranger!

Who am I?

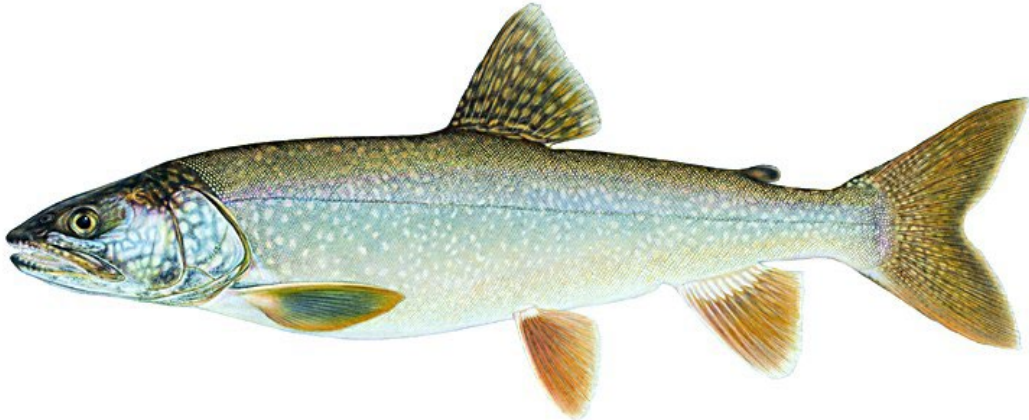
I am a...
Lahontan cutthroat trout

Lahontan cutthroat trout was once Lake Tahoe's top predator with individual fish weighing more than twenty pounds. They are not currently found in the lake due to overfishing and competition from non-native species. Actions are being taken to reintroduce populations throughout the basin.



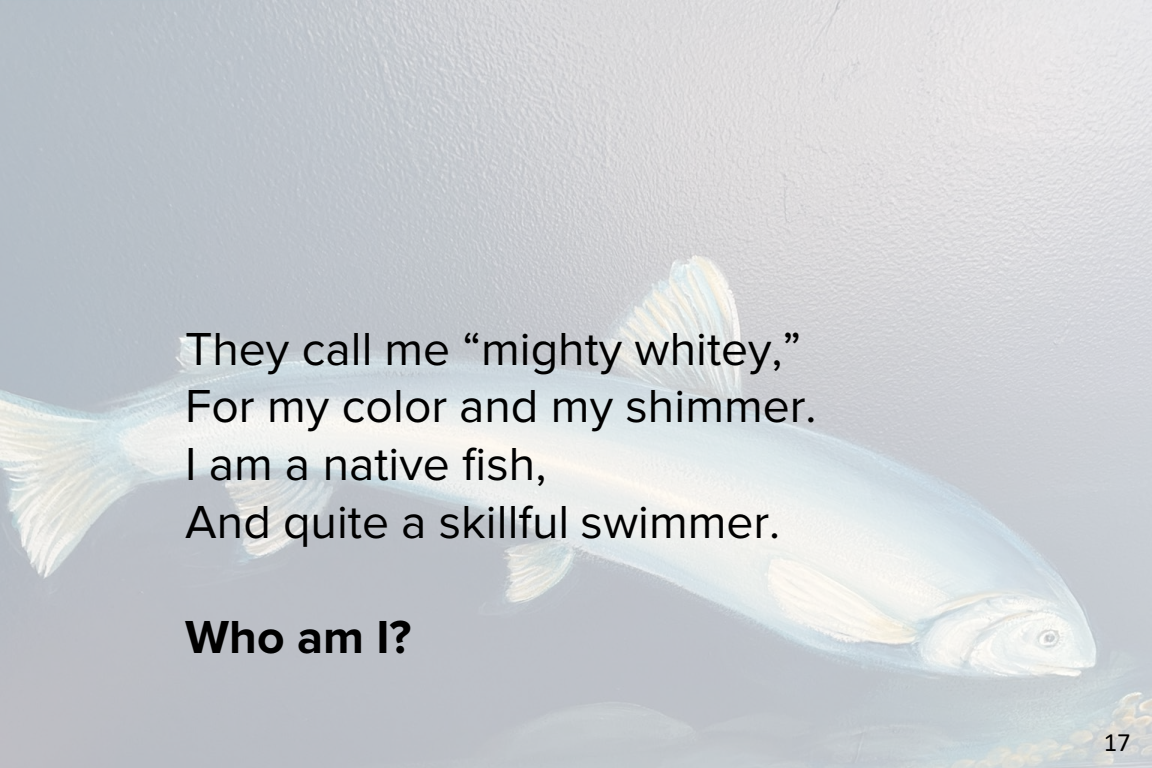
My teeth are large and sharp,
I'm the biggest fish around,
I'm not native to the lake,
But in the deep is where I'm found.

Who am I?



I am a...
Lake trout

Lake Trout, also known as Mackinaw can reach over 3 feet (1 meter) in length and can be found at depths of 150 – 300 feet. This fish was introduced to Lake Tahoe in the late 1880s. Adults, with their large and sharp teeth, feed almost exclusively on other fish (piscivorous). Lake trout may have been responsible for the disappearance of the native Lahontan Cutthroat trout, replacing it as the top predator in the lake.

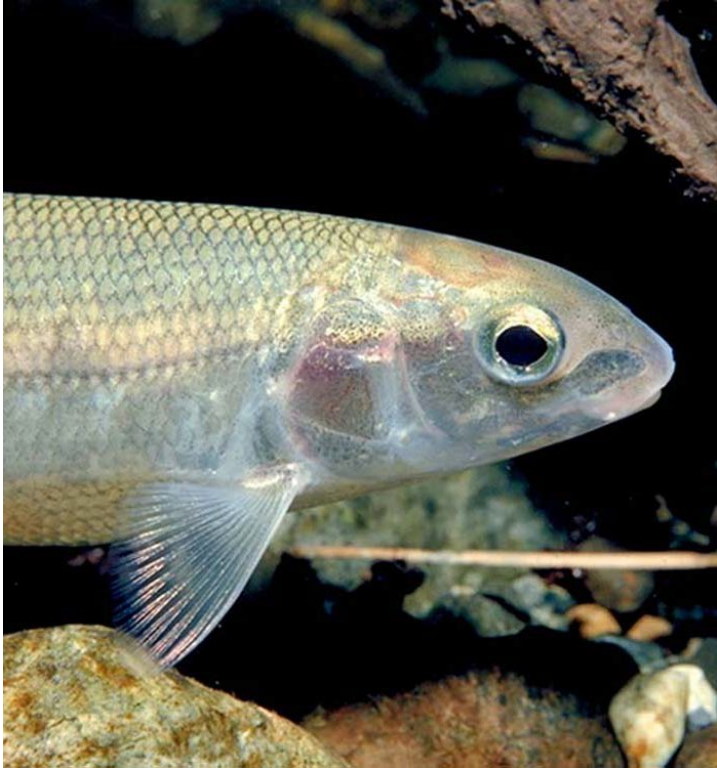


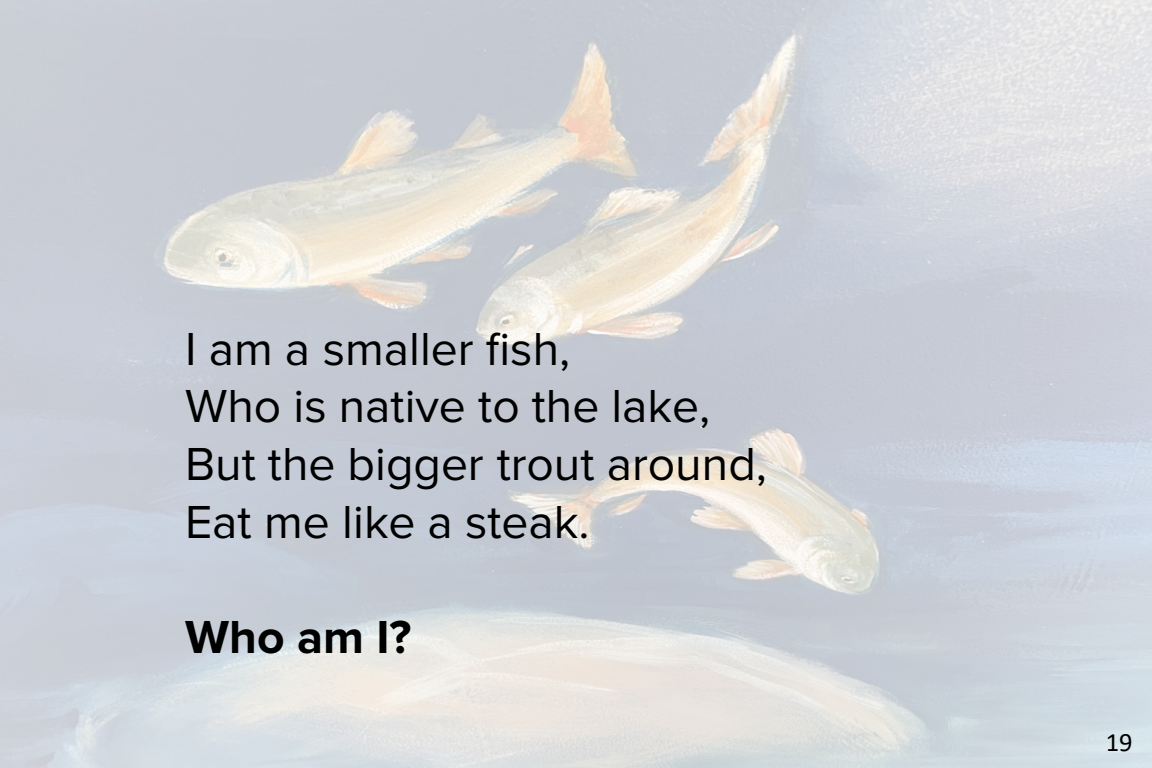
They call me “mighty whitey,”
For my color and my shimmer.
I am a native fish,
And quite a skillful swimmer.

Who am I?

I am a...
Mountain Whitefish

Mountain whitefish is the only native game fish left in Lake Tahoe. It is a bottom feeder and appears to eat whatever is in abundance, including fish eggs. It lives near the bottom at a depth of about 100 feet.





I am a smaller fish,
Who is native to the lake,
But the bigger trout around,
Eat me like a steak.

Who am I?

I am a...
Tui chub

Tui Chub can be found down to depths of 100 feet and can reach up to 18 inches in length. In large, open habitats, like Lake Tahoe, they move in schools. They feed mainly on plankton.

My mouth is located on the bottom of my head,
Acting like a vacuum pulling food from the floor.
I love living a long life in the shallow bottom waters.
And can be found in lakes, streams, and reservoirs.

Who am I?

I am a...
Tahoe sucker

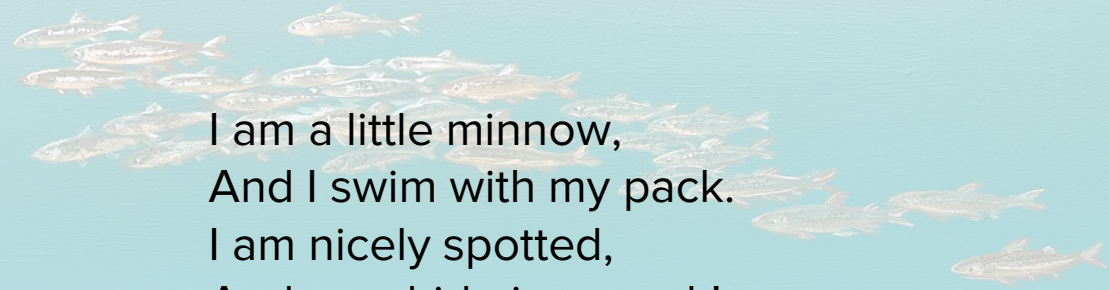
The Tahoe sucker is found in lakes and streams throughout the Tahoe Basin. Lake-dwellers are larger than those found in streams. Breeding males have a bright red line on their sides. Using the mouth located at the bottom of their head, they feed on aquatic plants and invertebrates found on the lake bottom.

I have a red stripe when I spawn,
And I am a native minnow.
We swim together under the pier,
Come close and away we go.

Who am I?

I am a...
Lahontan redside shiner

This species is thought to be the most beautiful of the California minnows. Reaching only four inches in length, they have a recognizable red streak during breeding season. They travel in schools and often hang out under piers. They eat terrestrial and aquatic insects, plankton, and fish eggs.

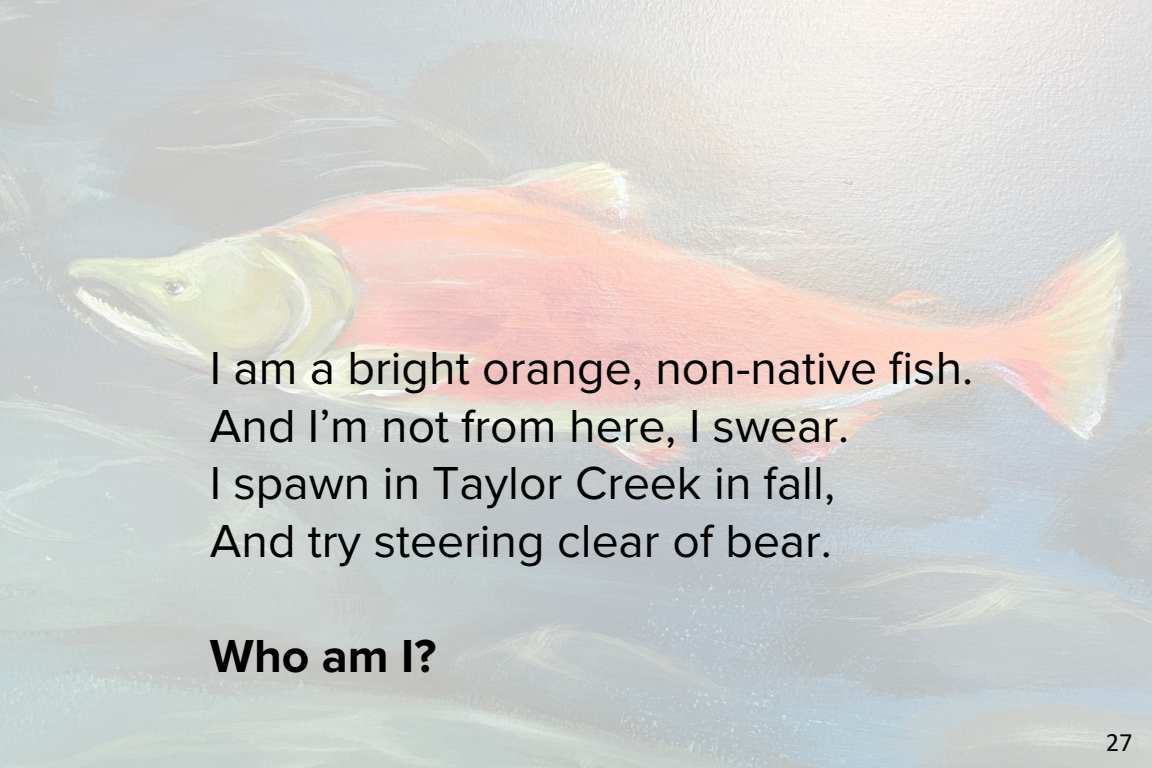


I am a little minnow,
And I swim with my pack.
I am nicely spotted,
And may hide in a crack!

Who am I?

I am a...
Lahontan speckled dace

The speckled dace is a native minnow that only grows to be four inches in length. They are semi-nocturnal, feeding at the bottom of the lake down to depths of up to 50 feet. This minnow is covered in spots.

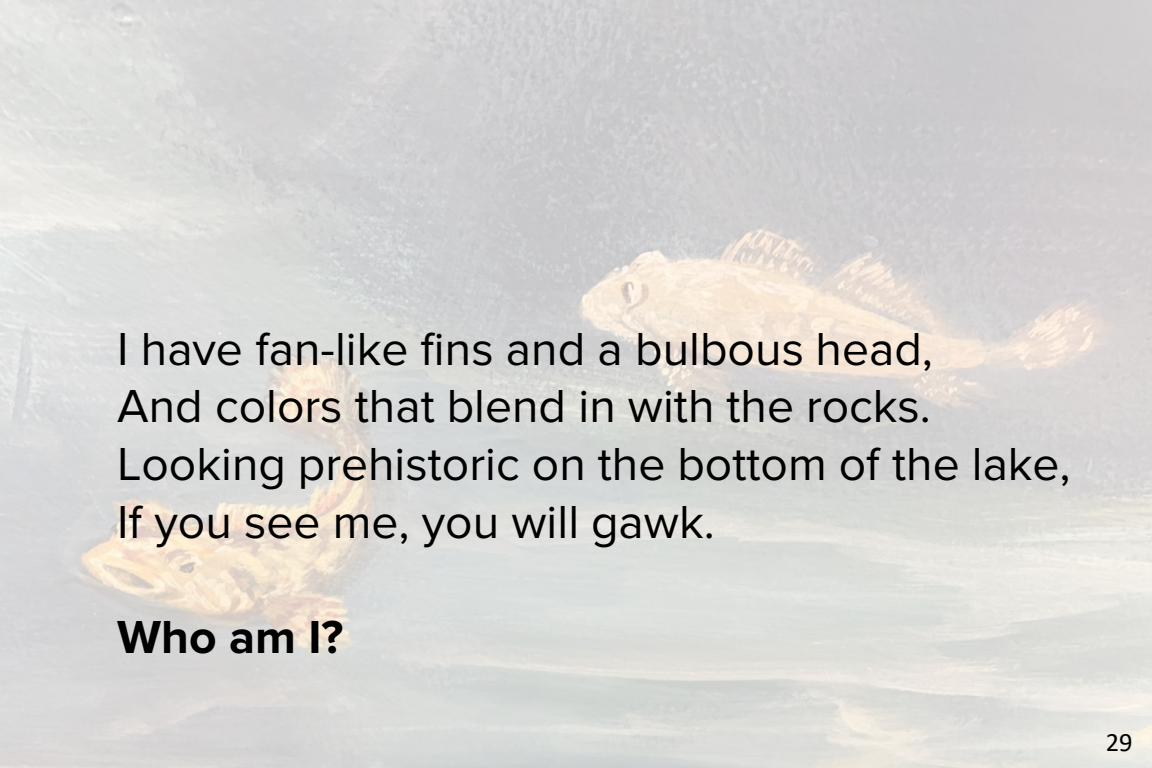


I am a bright orange, non-native fish.
And I'm not from here, I swear.
I spawn in Taylor Creek in fall,
And try steering clear of bear.

Who am I?

I am a... **Kokanee salmon**

Kokanee salmon are a non-native species that spawn in Taylor creek each fall. The male kokanee have a hook nose when they spawn, and both male and female are a dark orange-red color when they reach maturity.

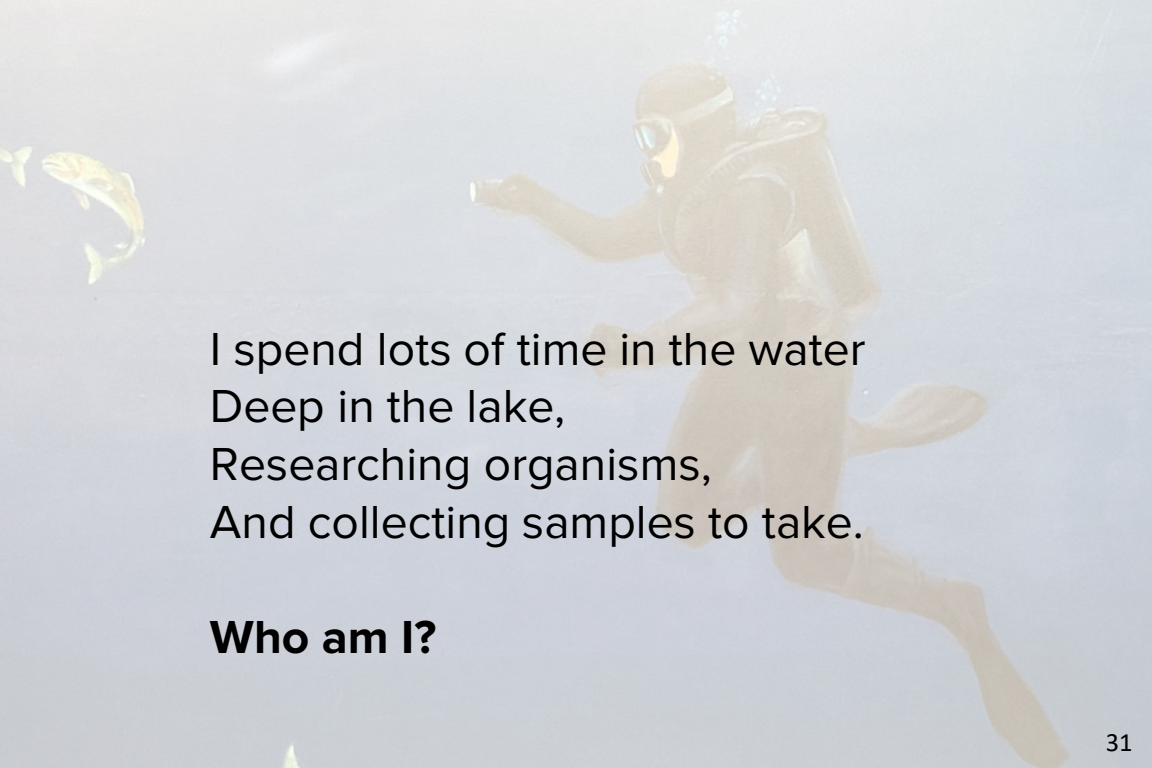


I have fan-like fins and a bulbous head,
And colors that blend in with the rocks.
Looking prehistoric on the bottom of the lake,
If you see me, you will gawk.

Who am I?

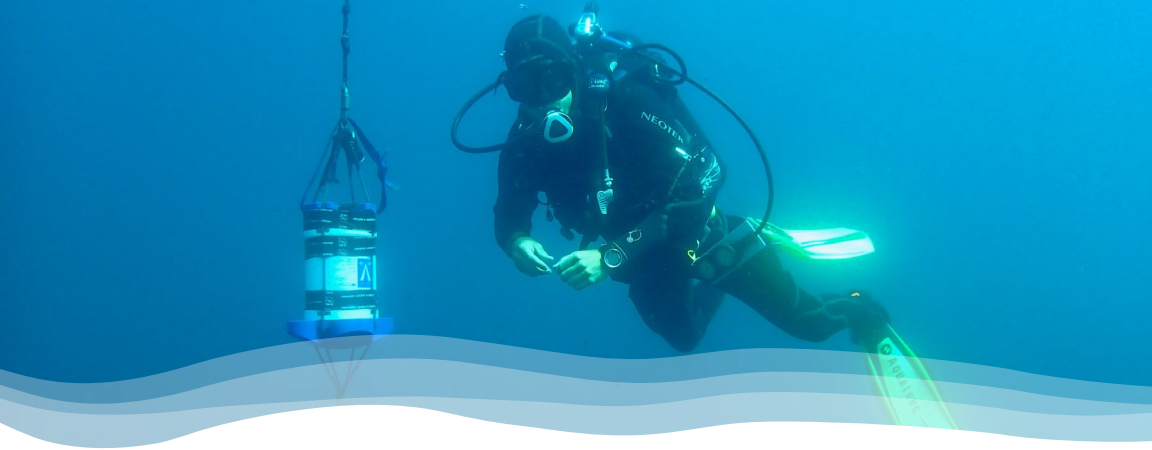
I am a...
Paiute sculpin

The native Paiute sculpin are the most abundant bottom-feeding fish in the Eastern Sierra. This fish only gets up to five inches long. Small and drably colored, this fish hides between rocks and sticks on the lake bottom. They have a flat, bulbous head and large fan-like fins that make them easy to identify.



I spend lots of time in the water
Deep in the lake,
Researching organisms,
And collecting samples to take.

Who am I?



I am a...
TERC Research Diver

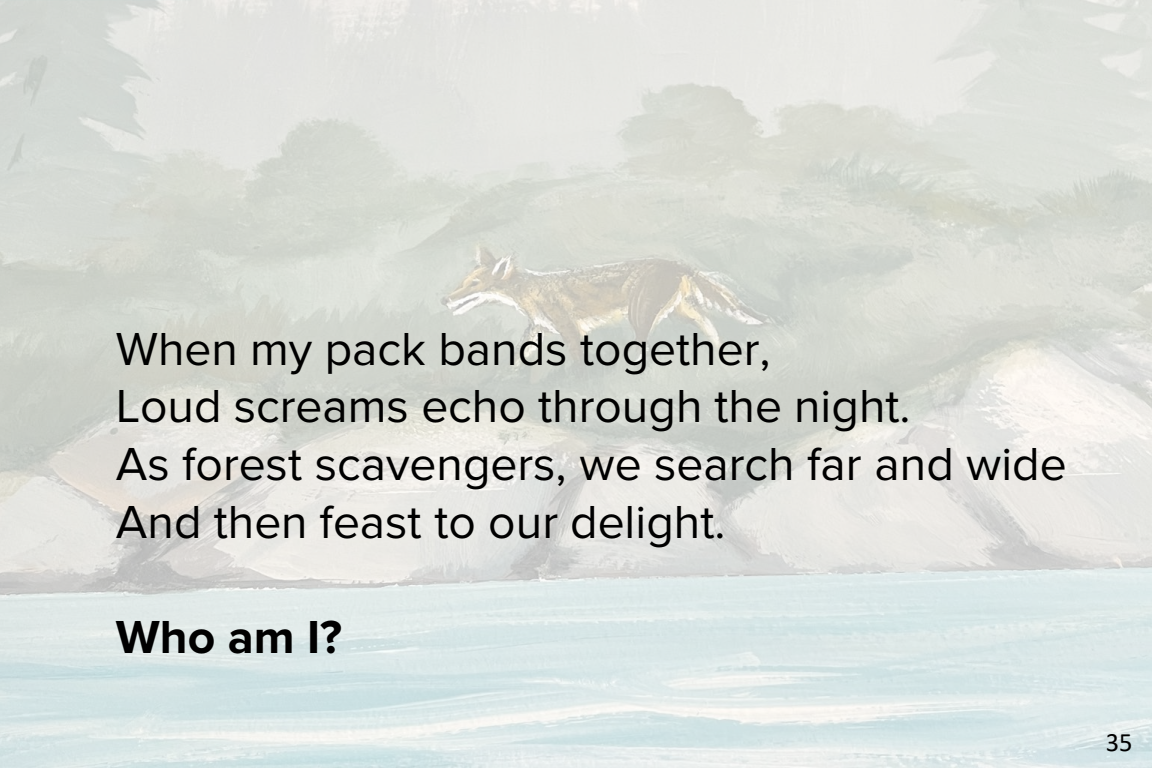
UC Davis research divers can be found underwater in any season of the year. They conduct experiments, install, test, and clean equipment, and are responsible for much of the research conducted out on the lake.

I’m one of Tahoe’s top predators,
See me soar high above.
Known for my white head,
I mate for life with the one I love.

Who am I?

I am a...
Bald eagle

This species of bird is native to Lake Tahoe, as well as many other parts of the American West. A top predator wherever it goes, it primarily feeds on fish. These large, celebrated birds live for many years and mate with the same breeding partner every year.

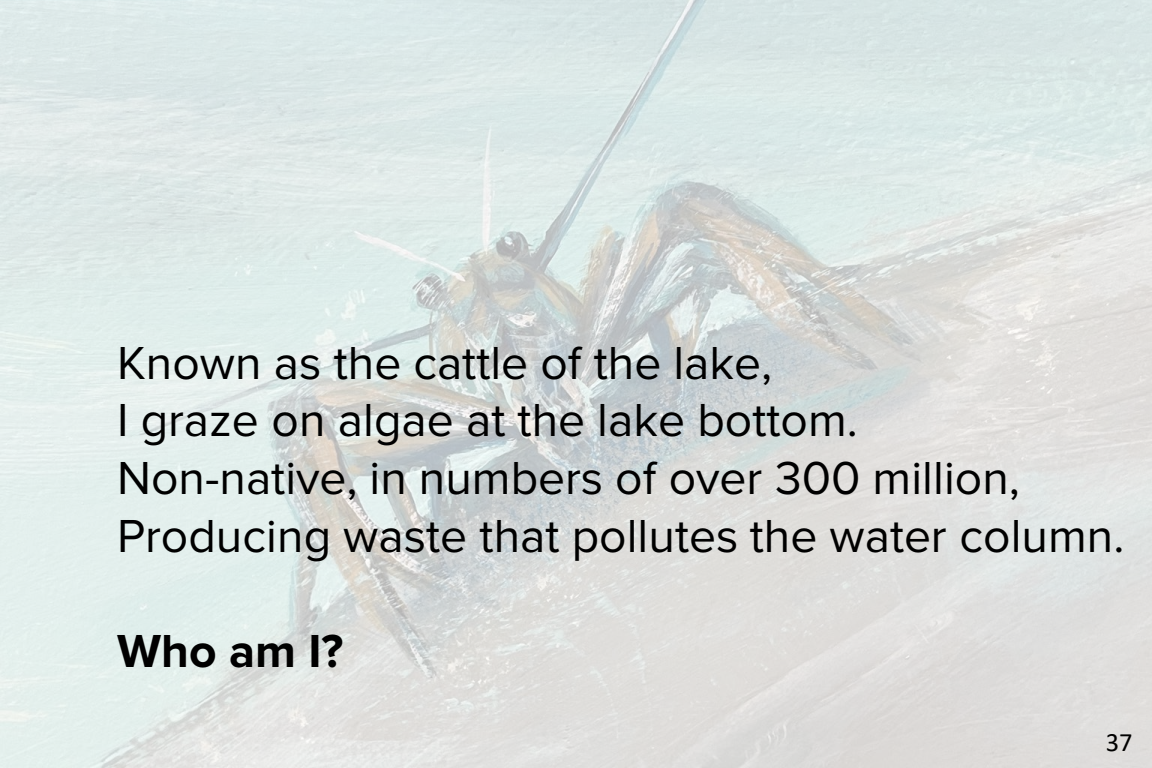


When my pack bands together,
Loud screams echo through the night.
As forest scavengers, we search far and wide
And then feast to our delight.

Who am I?

I am a...
Coyote

This carnivorous species is found in many different ecosystems throughout North America. Coyotes are scavengers and will eat whatever food is around. They favor meat and hunt small mammals, including mice, rabbits, rats, and squirrels. They move in packs, and you can hear their loud high-pitch barks and yips at night.

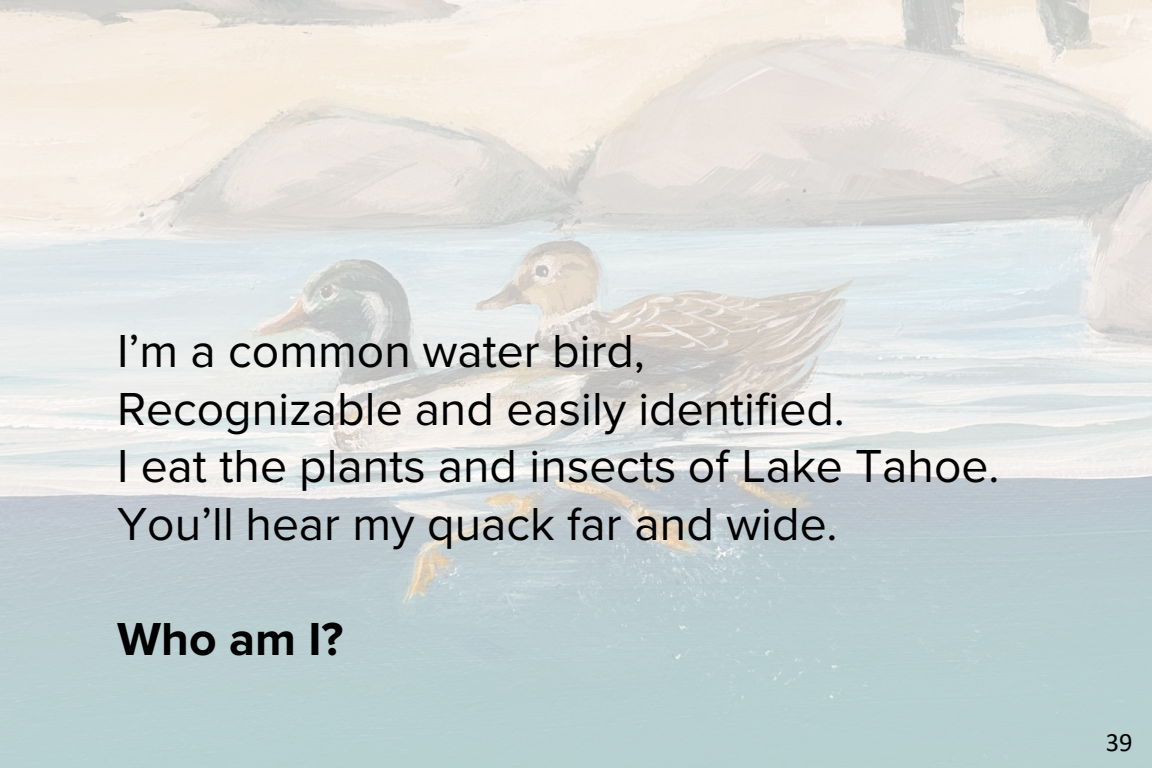


Known as the cattle of the lake,
I graze on algae at the lake bottom.
Non-native, in numbers of over 300 million,
Producing waste that pollutes the water column.

Who am I?

I am a...
Crayfish

This non-native species lives in abundance in the lake, feeding on algae. However, because of the waste they produce, they greatly reduce lake clarity. First introduced into the lake in 1895 as an attempt to bolster the population of introduced game fish.

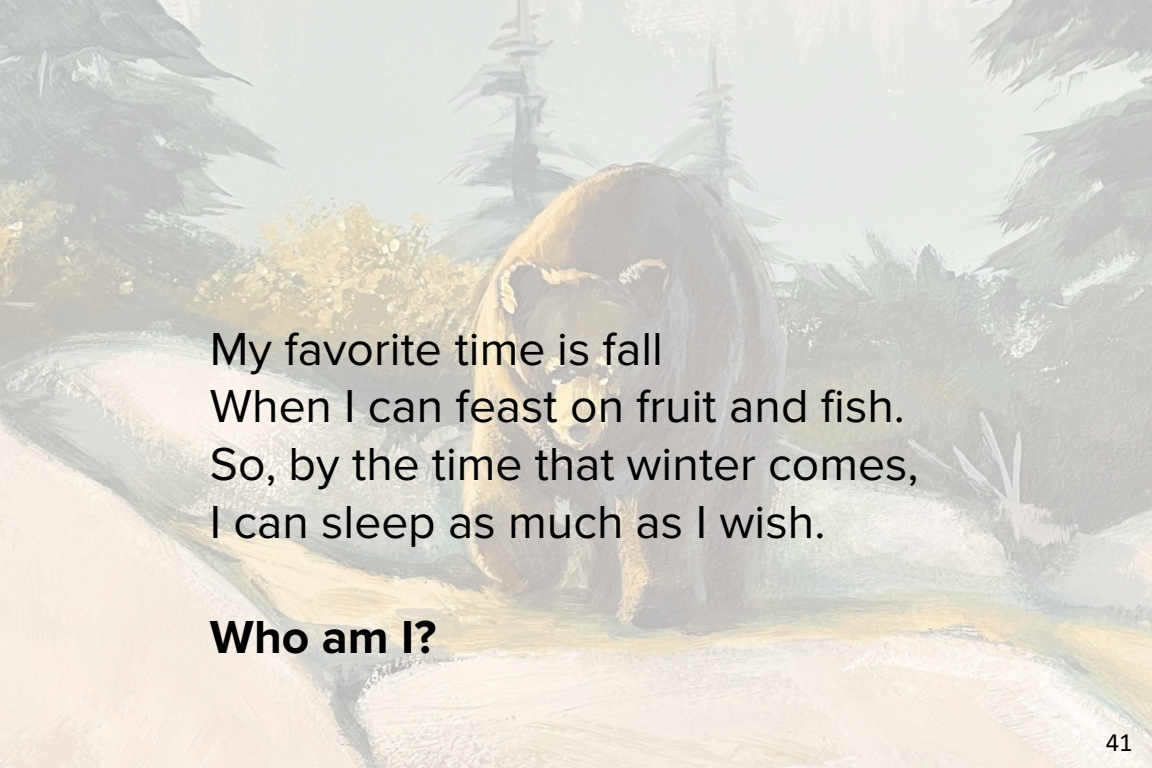


I’m a common water bird,
Recognizable and easily identified.
I eat the plants and insects of Lake Tahoe.
You’ll hear my quack far and wide.

Who am I?

I am a...
Mallard

Mallard ducks feed on plants, invertebrates, fish, and insects. Mallards are dabbling, or surface-feeding, ducks because they eat by tipping underwater for food—head down, feet and tail in the air—rather than diving.



My favorite time is fall
When I can feast on fruit and fish.
So, by the time that winter comes,
I can sleep as much as I wish.

Who am I?

I am a...

California black bear

This gentle giant can be black, brown, cinnamon, or blonde. Bears have incredible sense of small and can find ways to get into human sources of food, which can cause problems for these animals. Please don't ever feed the bears and always secure your trash.

UCDAVIS
Tahoe Environmental
Research Center

UCDAVIS
Tahoe Environmental
Research Center