

Three spined sticklebacks are usually two to four inches long, and live three to six years. They have a brownish back, with silvery sides and belly. Though in spring, males develop a red throat and stomach, and vivid sides. And like it says in its name, they have three pointed spines on their backs. These spines are always pointed up, making it hard for predators to swallow them, essentially protecting them.

Three spined sticklebacks are widely distributed in the marine, brackish and coastal freshwater areas of the Northern Hemisphere. The Pacific Ocean populations varied from Baja California, Mexico to the Bering Sea to Japan and North Korea. They are found in nearshore coastal waters in highly vegetated areas, normally above mud or sand.

Sticklebacks mainly eat benthic insects, but also consume other foods including algae, snails, worms, and small crustaceans. Sometimes, males will even eat stickleback eggs. Sticklebacks require clear water to see their food source, making them visual eaters.