

Freshwater Sportfish of New York

❖ A SAMPLER ❖



NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

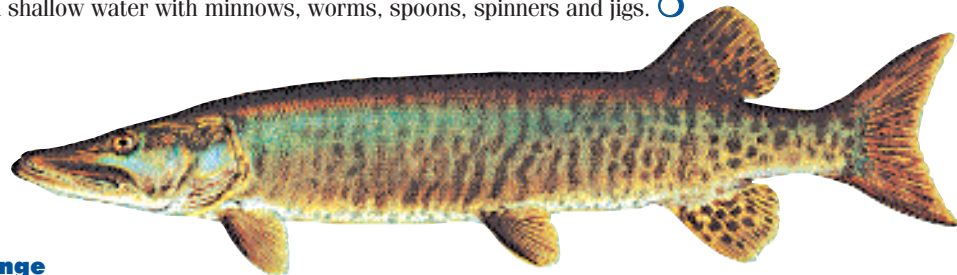
George E. Pataki, Governor Erin M. Crotty, Commissioner

PIKE & MUSKELLUNGE



Chain Pickerel

Averages 15-20 inches long. Gets name from dark, chain-link markings on sides and back. Widely distributed in waters south of the Adirondacks and east of the Genesee River. Prefers quiet waters with heavy weed growth. Needle-sharp teeth in their large mouths used for catching fish and some frogs. Favorite gamefish, especially with ice fishing anglers. Fish along weedbeds in shallow water with minnows, worms, spoons, spinners and jigs. ○



Muskellunge

Largest member of the pike family, grows to be 30-46 inches long. Limited distribution in New York. Found in cool lakes and large rivers, sometimes staying in moderately swift water. In New York, there are two strains— Great Lakes and Ohio. Have large, needle-sharp teeth that are used to grab food of fish, mice and ducks. Because of large size, held in high regard by anglers who mostly practice catch and release fishing. Muskies are taken by trolling large plugs, spinners or baitfish. ○



Northern Pike

Large fish, grow to be 25-36 inches long. Very adaptable, are one of the most widely distributed freshwater fish in the world. In New York, prefer weedy portions of cool water lakes, ponds and rivers, but large adults often move into deeper offshore waters. Needle-sharp teeth in their large mouths used for catching fish, crayfish, frogs and ducklings. An important sport-fish. Fish near or in weedbeds with large spoons, spinners, plugs or baitfish. ○

Artwork by Ellen Edmonson and Hugh Chrisp from the Conservation Department's biological surveys, and by Wayne Trimm. (Art not to scale). Text by Eileen Stegemann



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TROUT & SALMON



Brook Trout

Averages 12-15 inches long in ponds and 8-12 inches in streams. Also called speckled trout, brookies have a distinct bright white edging along their lower fins. New York's official state fish, brook trout live in small to moderate-sized clear, cold streams, lakes and ponds. Primarily eat insects. Popular gamefish, they are relatively easy to catch, frequently taken on flies, small artificial lures, minnows and worms. +

Lake Trout

Averages 15-34 inches long, but can reach weights of up to 30 pounds. This silvery or dark gray fish occurs in deep, cold well-oxygenated lakes. A native of New York, lakers are long-lived, some adults reaching 20 years old. Adults primarily eat fish. Prized by anglers for their large size and strength, are taken in early spring by trolling near surface with artificial lures or minnows. In summer, troll deep with downriggers. *



Atlantic Salmon

New York's only native salmon, Atlantics are one of our most highly-regarded sportfish. Adults average 12-30 inches and prefer open deep waters of cold, deep lakes. Primarily eats fish. Also known as "land-locked salmon," New York's Atlantics spend their entire lives in freshwater. Found in about 30 waters across the state. Caught by trolling streamer flies, spoons or plugs in open water areas. +

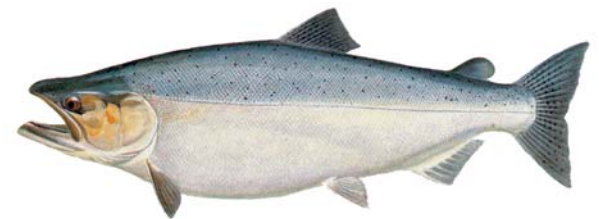


Rainbow Trout

Colorful, Pacific Coast native, rainbows are quite variable in size, averaging 8-20 inches in inland waters, and 20-34 inches in the Great Lakes. Their name comes from the pink or red band often present on their sides. Prefer cool lakes and large streams. Adults primarily eat fish. Lake-run variety (called steelhead) occurs in lakes Champlain, Ontario and Erie and their tributaries. Prized sportfish, known for leaping, caught on artificial lures or flies, and on worms and minnows. ▲

Brown Trout

Originally from Europe, browns are large fish, averaging 8-20 inches in inland waters and 20-32 inches in the Great Lakes. They are more tolerant of warmer water than brook trout, found in waters across New York, but prefer cool streams and lakes. Adults eat aquatic insects and fish. Relatively wary, browns can be difficult to catch and are the primary pursuit of fly fishing anglers. Cast or troll flies, artificial lures, worms and minnows. +



Chinook Salmon

Also called king salmon, chinooks are the largest of the Pacific salmon, averaging 24-44 inches. Found only in lakes Erie and Ontario and their tributaries. Adults eat fish. Important Great Lakes sportfish, taken in open water by trolling plugs and spoons and using downriggers to get lures deep. Also taken on trout or salmon egg sacs, lures and flies, fished in tributaries during fall spawning runs. +

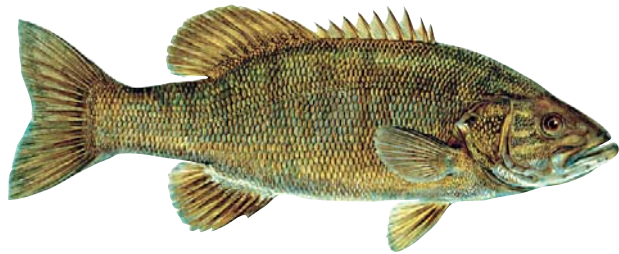
POPULAR WARMWATER SPORTFISH OF NEW YORK



Largemouth Bass

Largest member of the “sunfish” family, averages 8-17 inches long, and has been known to reach weights in excess of 10 pounds. Found among dense aquatic vegetation or close to submerged cover such as stumps, logs or dock pilings in warm, shallow, well-vegetated areas of lakes, ponds and sluggish streams. Eat primarily fish, crayfish and frogs.

A popular gamefish. Fish in weedy, stumpy areas—still fishing or casting with live bait or a wide variety of lures including plastic worms and surface plugs. ●

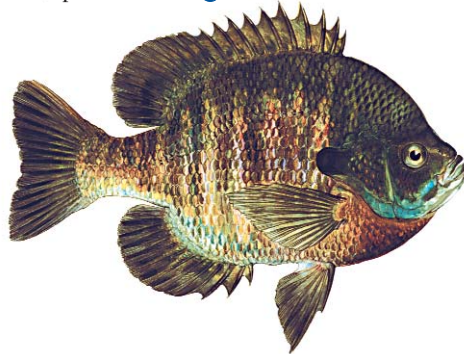


Smallmouth Bass

A large sunfish, averages 8-15 inches long. Smallmouths prefer cool, clear areas of lakes and streams with gravelly or rocky bottoms. Adults usually stay near protection of rocks and submerged logs. Eat primarily fish, crayfish and insects. Important gamefish, famous for their fighting ability when hooked. Still fish near rocks, shoals or other structure with live bait, or cast spinners, plugs or jigs. ●

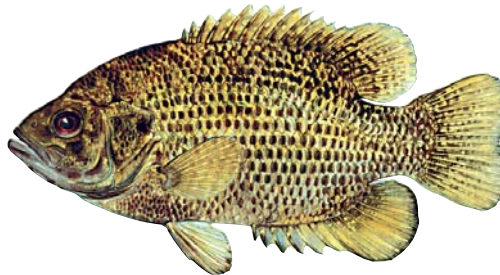
Bluegill

Grows 4-10 inches long. Colorful fish, often mistaken for pumpkinseed, but lacks orange/red spot on gill flap. Found in slow-moving or standing water with plenty of vegetation or other shelter. Eat mostly insects and crustaceans. Popular panfish, caught in shallow water near weedbeds on bait, artificial flies or small lures. Frequently stocked in farm ponds and other impoundments. ●



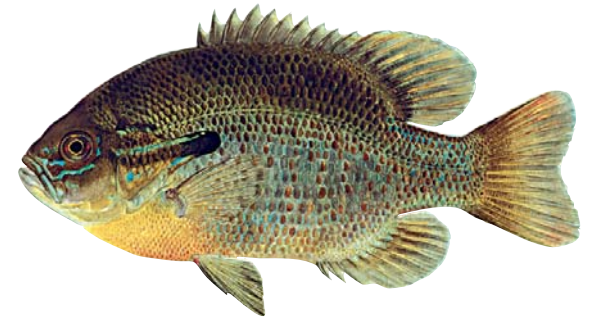
Rock Bass

Grows 6-10 inches long. Their bright red eyes earn them the nickname “redeyes.” Found in waters across the state; most abundant in rocky, gravelly shallow water areas of lakes and ponds, and lower, warm reaches of streams. Often occur with smallmouth bass. Eat mostly aquatic insects, crayfish and small fish. Popular panfish, fish along rocky areas and weeds using live bait, small spinners and plugs. ●



Pumpkinseed

Grows 4-8 inches long. Colorful warmwater fish with a bright orange/red spot on the gill flap. Most abundant and widespread sunfish in New York, occurs in shallow water in a variety of habitats from small lakes and ponds, to shallow, weedy bays of larger lakes and quiet waters of slow-moving streams. Eat wide array of prey such as insects, crustaceans and small fish. Easily caught, it is a favorite of small children. Fish in shallow water in sheltered areas, and use live bait or small spinners and jigs. ●



Redbreast Sunfish

Grows 4-8 inches long. Gets its name from the bright yellow to orange-red breast. Differs from pumpkinseed by its long, narrow black gill cover. Confined to eastern portion of the state. Inhabits lakes and ponds, but prefers clear, slow-moving streams with sandy or rocky bottoms. Eat mostly insects and crustaceans, plus some small fish. Fish near weeds in shallow water using live bait. ●

Fish Spawning and Fishing Seasons — Setting legal fishing seasons for individual fish species is one method of protecting a fish’s population. Since fish are frequently congregated and particularly vulnerable during their spawning season, often the fishing season is closed to enable the fish to spawn safely. Knowing a fish’s spawning time and egg release method can help you understand how regulatory guidelines are determined. Fish, such as yellow perch, that randomly distribute large numbers of eggs, produce more young and may require less strict fishing regulations.

Key:

- ✦ - spawns in fall; female digs nest on gravelly area; covers eggs & departs
- * - spawns in fall; scatters eggs over shallow, rocky reefs; no protection given
- ▲ - spawns late winter-spring; female digs nest on gravelly area; covers eggs & departs

- - spawns late spring-early summer; male digs nest in shallow water; guards eggs & young
- - spring; scatters eggs over vegetation (walleye over gravel bars); no care given
- - spring; deposits long string of eggs (up to 7ft); no care given
- ◆ - late spring-early summer; scatters eggs over vegetation; no care given

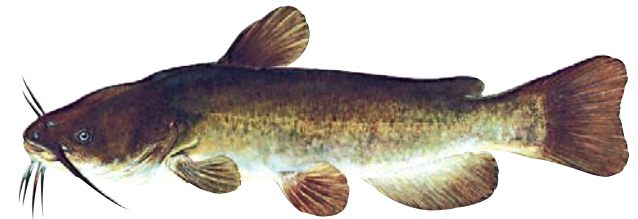


Walleye

Largest member of the perch family, averages 10-25 inches long. Found in every major watershed in New York except on Long Island. Prefers deep water sections of large lakes, streams and rivers. Have large, light-sensitive eyes to locate food in poor light. Large canine teeth used to catch favorite food of fish. Most active at night. Popular sportfish. Drift or troll with live bait, jigs, spinners and plugs. ○

Black Crappie

Grows 8-12 inches long; occasionally larger. With exception of the Adirondacks, common in waters across the state. Prefer clear, quiet areas of lakes, ponds and larger rivers with abundant vegetation. Eat small fish and insects. Popular panfish. Fish along rocky areas and in shallow coves and use minnows, worms and spinners. ●



Brown Bullhead

Averages 8-14 inches long. Easily recognizable by its broad, flat head and dark barbels (whiskers) around face. Has sharp spines on dorsal and pectoral fins. Very adaptable, it is the most common catfish in New York, found in cool Adirondack lakes, but most abundant in warmwater ponds, lakes and larger, slow-moving streams. Nighttime bottom feeder; uses barbels to locate food, including insects, snails, worms and small fish. Popular panfish, especially in the spring. Fish along the bottom in evening using worms, minnows and doughballs. ●

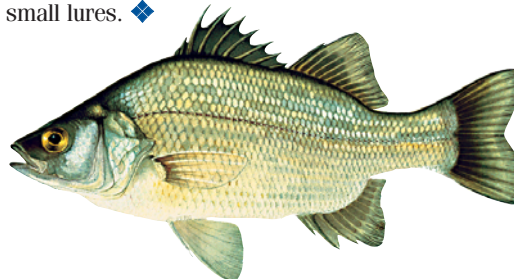


Yellow Perch

Grows 6-12 inches long. Easily distinguished by the 5-9 black vertical bars on their yellow sides. Important panfish, common across New York in a variety of habitats, but prefers shallow, weedy protected sections of rivers, lakes and ponds. Eat variety of organisms including aquatic insects, crayfish and fish. Popular with ice fishing anglers. Relatively easy to catch, often one of first fish caught by anglers. Fish along weedbeds and drop-offs with minnows, worms, grubs and a variety of small lures. □

White Perch

New York's smallest member of the temperate bass family, white perch average 6-12 inches long. Can live in both fresh and saltwater. Are native to brackish water, but now also occur in rivers, lakes and reservoirs. Found in several waters across the state, including the Hudson River, the Great Lakes and the Seneca and Mohawk river systems. Often occur in large schools in turbid, shallow areas. Adults eat fish and insects. Stillfish with worms or grubs or cast small lures. ◆



Common Carp

Large fish, carp average 15-20 inches long, but can grow to over 40 pounds in weight. Have large, heavy scales and two short barbels (whiskers). Found across the state except in cold trout streams and lakes. Prefers slow moving water with a soft bottom. Adults eat a variety of plant and animal material, often stirring up a cloud of mud as they feed. First brought here from Asia as a food fish, they offer a different angling experience, and fight hard on light tackle. ◆