

Fishes Of Wisconsin

Northern Pike

Common name: Northern pike

Scientific name: *Esox lucius* (*Esox* comes from the old name for pike in Europe and *lucius* comes from the supposed Latin name for the species).

Distribution: In Wisconsin, the northern pike occurs in the Mississippi River, Lake Michigan, and Lake Superior drainage basins. It is widely distributed throughout the state except in the unglaciated area, where it is sparsely dispersed except in large river systems and impounded areas. The

northern pike is generally common except in the southeastern quarter of the state, where populations are seriously depressed.

Spawning: Spawning may occur from late March to early April, as soon as the ice begins to break up in the spring.

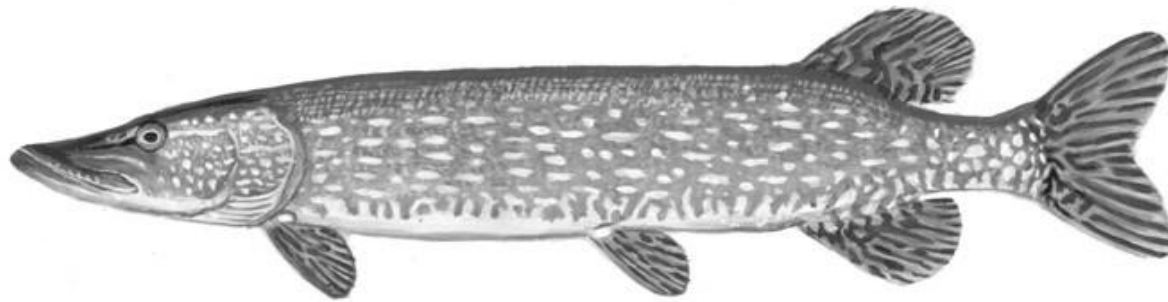
Migrations into the spawning areas take place during the night. Spawning occurs at temperatures between 34 and 40° F, but

Illustration: Virgil Beck

36 - 37° F seems to be the preferred range. Spawning takes place in flooded areas with emergent vegetation and involves one

female and from one to three attendant males. Eggs are deposited on vegetation to which they adhere. There is no parental care.

Angling: Unlike other common species of game fish, northern pike are most active when the water is cool. The northern pike is quite accommodating to anglers, biting best during the daylight hours. Being a predator, northerns prefer live fish baits and wobbling spoons. They are a favorite target of ice fishermen with tip-ups.



Walleye

Common name: Walleye

Scientific name: *Sander vitreus* (*Sander* refers to the German common name of the European relative) and *vitreus* means "glassy", referring to the large eye.

Distribution: It is believed that the walleye was originally confined to the larger lakes and waterways in Wisconsin. The extensive stocking of walleye fry and fingerlings that occurred early in many Wisconsin waters partly obscured the original distribution of the species. Today the walleye is present throughout Wisconsin.

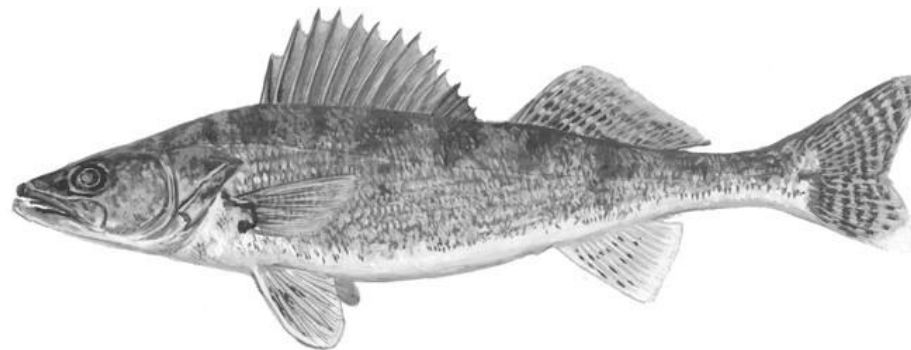
Spawning: The spawning migration of walleye begins soon after the ice goes out, at water

temperatures of 38 - 44° F. Spawning in Wisconsin generally occurs between mid-April and early May, although it may extend from the beginning of April to the middle of May. Walleye spawning ordinarily reaches a peak when water temperatures are 42 - 50° F. The walleye is not a territorial fish at spawning time; they

usually broadcast their eggs and exercise no parental care.

Angling: The walleye is one of the most highly prized game fishes in Wisconsin. Thousands are caught each year during their spring spawning runs. Walleyes are primarily minnow feeders, but leeches, small bullheads, nightcrawlers, and

various small plugs are favorite baits. In clear waters, walleyes usually stay in deeper areas during the day, moving into the shallows at night. In more turbid waters, they can be caught throughout the day. The large, unusual eyes of the walleye are designed to help them easily find their prey.



Parmesan-crusted walleye

Ingredients

1/2 cup all-purpose flour
1 tablespoon seafood seasoning
2 large eggs
1 cup panko bread crumbs
3 ounces Nordic Creamery Parmesan cheese, finely shredded (about 1 cup)
1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper
4 walleye or whitefish fillets (6 ounces each)
1/2 cup canola oil
Lemon wedges and tartar sauce

Instructions

Combine flour and seafood seasoning in a large, shallow bowl. Lightly beat eggs in a separate large, shallow bowl. Combine the bread crumbs, parmesan, salt and pepper in another large, shallow bowl. Pat fillets dry with paper towels. Coat fish in flour mixture. Dip fillets into eggs; then coat with parmesan mixture, shaking off any extra coating between steps. Place on a baking sheet. Warm canola oil in a large, heavy skillet over medium-high heat. Add two fillets; cook for 4-5 minutes on each side or until fish flakes easily. Repeat step with remaining fillets. Serve with lemon wedges and tartar sauce.

Fish kills may be more common during summer heat

With increasing temperatures across Michigan, anglers, boaters and lakefront property owners may discover dead fish or other aquatic animals. While such sights can be startling, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources reminds everyone that it is common — summer heat conditions can cause fish and other creatures such as turtles, frogs, toads and crayfish to die.

"The majority of summer fish kills are due to low oxygen in the water, a natural phenomenon associated with

weather," said Jeremiah Blaauw, DNR fisheries biologist. "However, some other factors such as chemical treatments of aquatic plants and algae can increase the risk of a fish kill."

Environmental conditions strongly affect the stress level of fish; temperature and dissolved oxygen concentrations are key variables. Fish need oxygen just as humans do, but fish absorb dissolved oxygen (oxygen gas that is dissolved in water) directly through their gills into the bloodstream.

During periods of hot, calm weather, dissolved levels of oxygen in nutrient-rich lakes often decline, while the metabolic rate in most fish — the number of calories needed to accomplish basic life-sustaining functions like respiration — increases. That means fish in these systems often are being pinched by both temperature and oxygen at the same time.

"Nutrient-rich" sounds like a good thing, but that isn't necessarily true when it comes to water quality," Blaauw said. "Our lakes often

have artificially high concentrations of nutrients due to human-connected sources like wastewater or fertilizer runoff. The nutrients support dense growth of plants and algae. While plants and algae produce oxygen during the day through photosynthesis, they consume oxygen at night via their own respiration. This situation can lead to oxygen crashes during warm summer nights."

Spawning stress is another factor that plays a critical role in many fish mortality events.

Most fish kill events are the culmination of a series of causes. For example, the following scenario occurs every year in southern Michigan. Bluegills are stressed from spawning activity. At the same time, a period of hot weather causes water temperatures to rise rapidly. Herbicide is applied to control algae and invasive plant species. This combination of stressors depresses the immune system, and bacteria already present in the lake infect bluegills and result in an out-

break of columnaris disease.

Learn more about fish kills at Michigan.gov/FishHealth.

The public is welcome to report fish kills using the Eyes in the Field website; such reports are valuable to the DNR's ability to manage the state's aquatic resources. If you suspect a fish kill is due to nonnatural causes, call the nearest DNR office or Michigan's Pollution Emergency Alert System at 800-292-4706.