

Dedicated to the Memory of  
Commissioner Enoch S. "Inky" Moore Jr.



# PLAY

Fall  
2015

Pennsylvania • League • of • Angling • Youth

## All about the Pike Family!



There are currently five pike fish species that occur naturally or are native to Pennsylvania. All are popular with Pennsylvania anglers. Their fierce struggle to be caught makes them an attractive sportfish. Those native to Pennsylvania include the Redfin Pickerel, Grass Pickerel, Northern Pike, Muskellunge and Chain Pickerel.

Members of this family have long and slender bodies. They are easily identified by their "duck bill." Females grow faster

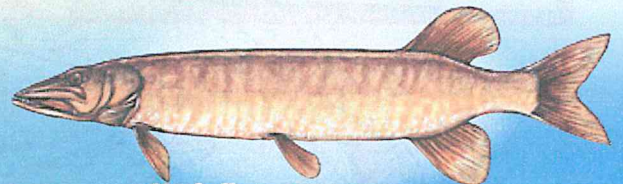
and live longer than males. Pike are ambush predators, fish that eat other fish. They wait in cover as their prey approaches. Then, they strike.

Pike are active by day, and most live in coolwater streams and large rivers. They also like lakes with submerged vegetation. The family name "Esocidae" is from "Esox," an old European name for the pike.

In the next few pages, you will learn some interesting facts about the pike family.



**Redfin Pickerel**  
(*Esox americanus americanus*)



**Muskellunge**  
(*Esox masquinongy*)



**Northern Pike**  
(*Esox lucius*)



**Grass Pickerel**  
(*Esox americanus vermiculatus*)



**Chain Pickerel**  
(*Esox niger*)



# Chain Pickerel



*Kiersten Dennison, age 12, caught this Chain Pickerel at High Point Lake, Somerset County, using a shiner.*

## Chain Pickerel

Chain Pickerel are the most abundant species of the pike family. Chain Pickerel can grow to more than 30 inches in length. Trophy Chain Pickerel can weigh 4 to 5 pounds. Pennsylvania's current state record is over 8 pounds.

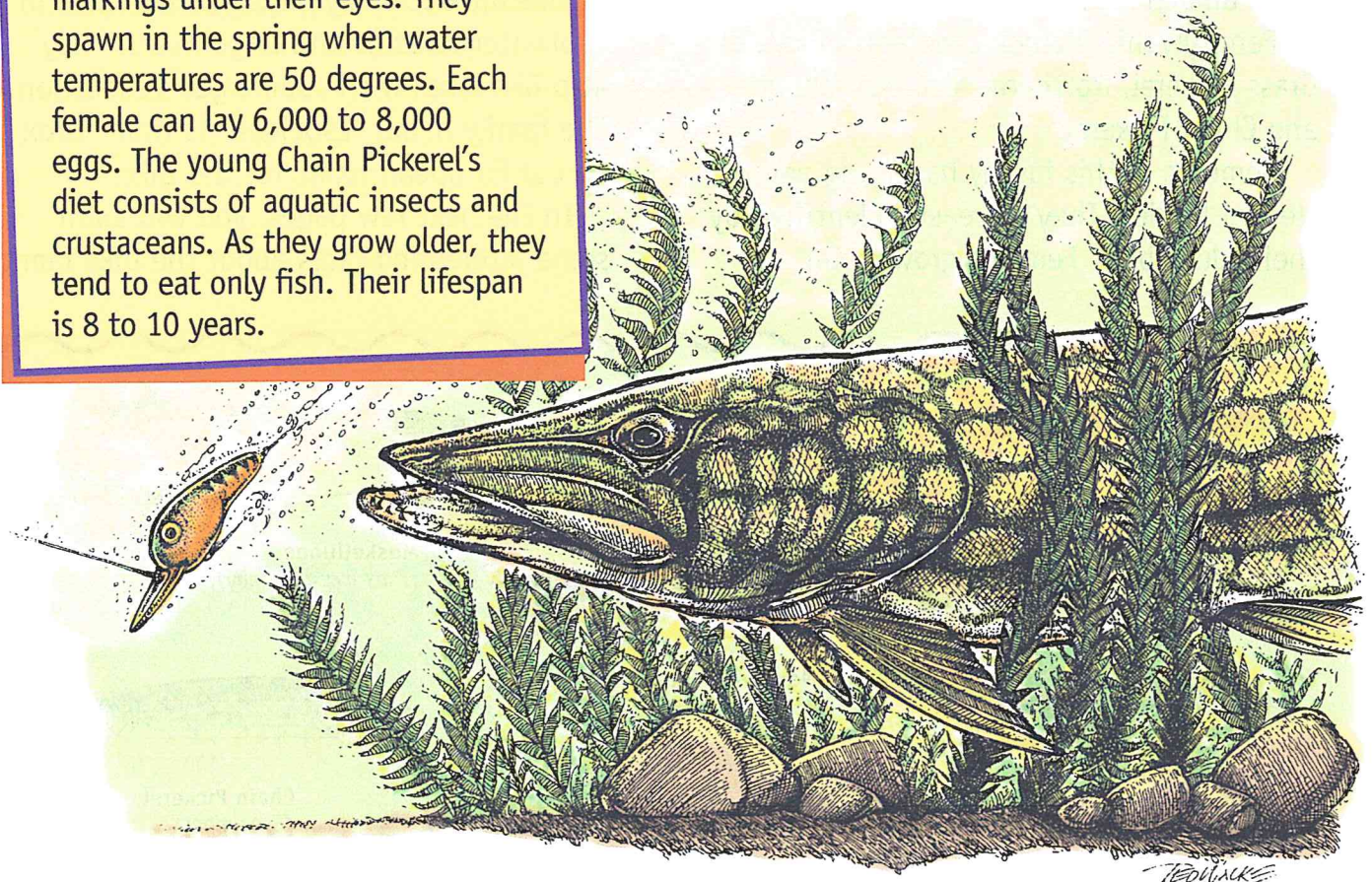


## Identification

An easy way to identify a Chain Pickerel is by the teardrop black markings under their eyes. They spawn in the spring when water temperatures are 50 degrees. Each female can lay 6,000 to 8,000 eggs. The young Chain Pickerel's diet consists of aquatic insects and crustaceans. As they grow older, they tend to eat only fish. Their lifespan is 8 to 10 years.

## Habitat

Their habitat consists of weed beds and sunken stumps in lakes and rivers. They are commonly shallow water dwellers. However, they can live in deeper lakes.





# Muskellunge

What do you think is the largest sportfish in Pennsylvania? Flathead Catfish? No. Northern Pike? No. **Muskellunge**? Yes, you guessed it. The current Pennsylvania state-record Muskellunge was caught at Conneaut Lake, Crawford County, in 1924. It weighed over 54 pounds!

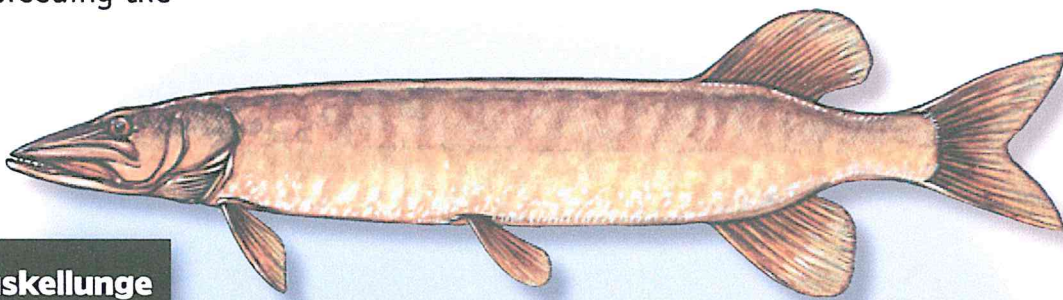


*This Muskellunge was caught by Hunter Rocuskie, age 13, on the Juniata River, Mifflin County.*

Muskellunge are coolwater fish found in clear natural lakes and rivers. Most Muskellunge can reach over 48 inches long. Muskellunge don't swim far in search of their prey. They are known to be a top predator. Their main diet is fish. However, they won't pass up a snake, muskrat or even waterfowl for food. The average age of a caught musky is 3- to 6-years-old. Their natural life span is up to 20 years. The tiger muskellunge (*Esox lucius x Esox masquinongy*) is a result of crossbreeding the

male Northern Pike with the female Muskellunge. This happens under hatchery conditions. They respond better to hatchery rearing than their purebred parents. Some anglers believe tiger muskellunge are easier to catch. Tiger muskellunge can grow 36 to 48 inches long.

Visit the Commission's Muskellunge webpage at [www.fishandboat.com/musky.htm](http://www.fishandboat.com/musky.htm).



**Muskellunge**



**Tiger Muskellunge**