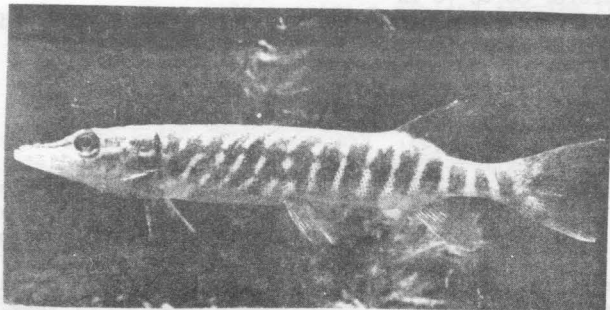
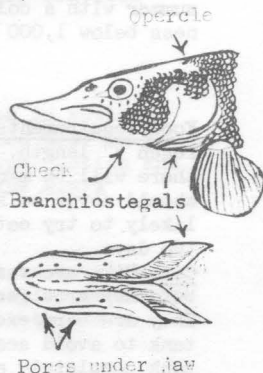


Adult Northern Pike-Both Sexes Similar



Young Northern

IDENTIFICATION

Family-The pike family, Esocidae can be easily identified by the duck like bill and the long thin body. No other NA freshwater fish have this duck like snout. The family has only one Genera (*Esox*) and 5 or 6 species.

Species-The spotted pattern is somewhat distinctive but young Northerns are barred similar to Muskellunge and adults can vary in color and markings making the identification difficult from Muskellunge. For positive identification Northern have their cheeks fully scaled and opercles 1/2 scaled while Musky have top 1/2 of both cheeks and opercles scaled and Pickerel have both fully scaled. Northern have 10 or less sensory pores under their jaw and Muskies have 12 or more pores. They also have 14-16 Branchiostegals and Muskies 17-19. Northern can be separated from Pickerel by the tear drop like marking on Pickerel below the eye, also by size and pattern marking on body. Amur Pike from Europe may resemble Northerns but Amur Pike have scales on top of the snout which no other pike has.

Hybrids-Northern have crossed in the wild with Muskies but it is rare due to the later spawning date of the Musky. All members of the pike family can be crossed in hatcherys. (1)

Size-Young of the year 6" to 12". Adults 20" to 48". 2 lbs. to 20 lbs. Occasionally larger up to 55 lbs.

Color-Green or gray background with light colored spots. Color is variable and in some lakes Northerns have reddish fins. All Silver Northern Pike with no spotted markings exist in northern Minn. and Canada. See photo of Silver Northern Pike in Northern Fishes. (2) Normal markings of adult and young of year above.

- (1) Interspecific Hybridization of Esocids Progressive Fish Culturist
- (2) Northern Fishes by Samuel Eddy and Thaddeus Surber

DISTRIBUTION AND HABITAT

Distribution-Original range shown on map plus most of Northern Europe. They have also been introduced outside this range by many public and private organizations as game fish.

Habitat-Northerns are usually found in lakes that have outlets and in slow moving streams and rivers where the water depth is 1 foot deep or more. They prefer calm, weedy areas where the water is from 1 to 20 ft. deep.

Water Requirements-Temperature 35 to 85 degrees fahrenheit. Prefer 60 to 70 in summer with a cold winter temp. to stimulate spawning. P.H. 6 to 9. Hardness below 1,000 ppm total alkalinity. Salinity below 1‰.



FEEDING AND CARE

Food requirements-Pike need live food. Preferably live fish after they reach 4" length. They are extremely difficult to train to eat pellets and there will be many mortalities even if started at a young age. (3) They should never be kept with fish 2/3 as long as they are or they are very likely to try eating them even though they cannot swallow them in one or two days.

Care-Pike are very peaceful community fish if they can't eat tank mates but they grow fast and will outgrow most aquariums in 6 months or less. They are very excitable, especially at first so move slowly around the tank to avoid scaring them and causing them to hit the glass. Also cover tank completely as they are good jumpers. Northern have not been spawned in aquariums due to size and temp. requirements in winter.

Artificial propagation-Pike are normally propagated by stripping eggs and milt from wild fish in the spring and then hatching eggs in hatcheries but it is very difficult to get a good percentage of eggs to hatch and also difficult to raise young pike until they are large enough to eat minnows. (4) The difficulty is in supplying enough daphnia or live food in preventing cannibalism. They are also propagated by putting adult spawners in shallow, weedy ponds and then letting them reproduce naturally. (5)

HABITS

Spawning-Northerns spawn just as the ice leaves the lakes in spring at 35 to 45 degrees f. by running up small streams to scatter their eggs indiscriminately in grassy swamps and meadows. There is no evidence of homing and they occasionally spawn in the weedy shallows in lakes.

Habits-Northerns are solitary predators that like to lie and wait for fish to swim within 6" to 1' of them before striking with lightning speed. They always grab the side of their prey and then slowly turn the fish by short snapping motions until the fish is pointed with the head entering first. They will swallow fish almost as long as they are by digesting one end of the fish and then gradually swallowing the rest after the first part is digested. In hatchery ponds Northerns are such aggressive predators that they will try to swallow their brothers and sisters and will actually form large chains of perhaps 6 or 8 fish, each one swallowing a portion of the one in front.

(3) The Successful Feeding of a Dry Diet to Esocids by Graff and Sorenson

(4) Culture and Diseases of Game Fishes by H.S. Davis

(5) The Natural Propagation of Pike in Small Drainable Ponds by

D.B. McCarraher in Progressive Fish Culturist Vol. 19 ppgs. 185-187