



CHAPTER 10

WHAT DO I LOOK LIKE? (fish identification guide)

IDENTIFYING CHARACTERISTICS

Identifying Alaska's common sport fish species is easy when you know what characteristics to look for. The images below will help you identify your ice fishing catch.



Arctic Grayling (*Thymallus arcticus*)

Description: Large, colorful dorsal fin. Fish often winter in lakes connected to streams and rivers where they spend summers eating insects. They are considered excellent eating when fresh.



Image provided by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. All rights reserved.

Burbot (*Lota lota*)

Description: Lives in deep rivers and lakes. Found in shallow water when spawning under the ice or while feeding at night. Bottom dweller, diet varies. They are considered excellent eating.



Chinook Salmon (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)

Description: Has small black spots on back above lateral line and on both lobes of the caudal fin. Small, landlocked Chinooks are often found in stocked lakes. They are considered excellent eating.



Dolly Varden/Arctic Char

(*Salvelinus malma/Salvelinus alpinus*)

Description: Pinkish, orange, yellow, or red spots on sides. Found in lakes and rivers. Diet may vary. Considered excellent eating.



Image provided by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. All rights reserved.

Lake Trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*)

Description: Often found in deep, cold lakes. Diet may vary. Flesh may vary in color depending on diet. Considered excellent eating.



Rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

Description: Color may vary, but pinkish color on the sides along lateral line is common. Diet may vary. Considered excellent eating.



Kokanee/Sockeye (Red) Salmon (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)

Description: Landlocked sockeye salmon are called Kokanee. Lack black spots and have a green head. Kokanee do not get as large as their migrating relative. Meat is bright red and considered excellent eating.



Image provided by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. All rights reserved.

Northern Pike (*Esox lucius*)

Description: Commonly found in found in shallow, weedy waters. Northern pike are considered an invasive species in Southcentral Alaska. They are voracious predators with large mouths filled with sharp teeth. Pike have a unique bone structure involving “Y-bones” and are considered good eating.

Possible extension activities:

- 1) (Review Exercise) Create cards with the common name of the fish on one side and the description on another card. If a color printer available, print the images and cut out the pictures and on another card write out the description; a matching game can be made out of the cards.
- 2) (Review Exercise) Create a dichotomous key using the characteristic.
- 3) (Research Exercise) Look up additional information about a sport fish species. Find information about their geographic range, diet, size range, Alaska state record, etc.



CHAPTER 11

Fish On! (Catch-and-release or catch-and-keep)

Now you know the equipment needed to go ice fishing, the habitat in the lake preferred by the fish you're seeking, how to identify your catch and, of course, how to fish safely. However, we still need to talk about what to do once you have reeled in your catch.

The first decision you need to make is whether or not you are going to keep your catch. If you decide to release your fish so that one day you might come back and catch it again, you need to know some basic catch-and-release principles.

To Release A Fish:

- 1) Get the fish up to the edge of your hole as soon as possible. That fish is fighting for its life and you do not want to wear it down too much.
- 2) Keep the fish in the water.
- 3) Remove any gloves and wet your hands. Fish are covered with slime which protects them from infections, aids them in escaping from predators, and helps them slide through the water easier. Your gloves or dry hand can harm fish by removing the slime layer.