

Maine Fishing Laws

A message from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife:

- A person is required to obtain a valid fishing license prior to fishing in inland waters or transporting fish taken from inland waters. A person is required to keep his/her fishing license with him/her at all times while fishing or transporting fish and must exhibit their license for inspection by any warden, department employee, guide or landowner upon request.
- Possession of fishing tackle in the fields or forest or on the waters or ice of this State without a fishing license is prima facie evidence of fishing in violation of the law.
- When obtaining a resident license, it is the responsibility of the applicant to submit proof of residency.
- Maine residents under 16 years of age and nonresidents under 12 years of age may fish without a license.
- **Season Fishing License** [(16 and older) - \$52.00]: A season fishing license is required for residents, nonresidents, and aliens 16 years of age or older to fish in the inland waters of Maine.
Note: A Maine resident under 16 years of age may fish without a fishing license. A nonresident or alien 12 years of age and under 16 years of age must purchase a junior fishing license.
- **Nonresident Junior Fishing License** [(12-15 years) - \$9.00]: A nonresident junior fishing license is required for nonresidents and aliens 12-15 years to fish in the inland waters of Maine.
- **15-Day Fishing License** [(16 & older) - \$40.00]: A nonresident or alien 16 years of age and older may purchase a 15-day fishing license which permits them to fish in inland waters for the dates specified on the license. A nonresident 15-day fishing license may be exchanged for a nonresident season fishing license upon payment of \$12.00 plus the agents fee.
- **7-Day Fishing License** [(16 & older) - \$36.00]: A nonresident or alien 16 years of age and older may purchase a 7-day fishing license which permits them to fish in inland waters for the dates specified on the license.
- **3-Day Fishing License** [(16 & older) - \$23.00]: A nonresident or alien 16 years of age and older may purchase a 3-day fishing license which permits them to fish in inland waters for the dates specified on the license.
- **1-Day Fishing License** [(16 & older) - \$11.00]: A resident, nonresident, or alien 16 years of age and older may purchase a 1-day fishing license which permits them to fish in inland waters for the date specified on the license.

Saltwater Fishing Information

The following information is applicable to all the waters of the State within the rise and fall of the tide and within the marine limits of the State, but not including areas above any fishway or dam when the fishway or dam is the dividing line between tidewater and freshwater.

The Department of Marine Resources (DMR) is the State agency that is established to conserve and develop marine and estuarine resources. The Bureau of Resource Management promotes and develops recreational and commercial saltwater fisheries through research, technical assistance, and the collection of statistics.

The Bureau of Marine Patrol enforces laws and regulations pertaining to saltwater recreational and commercial fishing activities as well as Maine's boat laws, including operation, registration and safety requirements. For information, contact the DMR at: 21 SHS, Augusta, Maine 04333-0021; telephone: (207) 624-6550. Saltwater angling licenses are not required for recreational saltwater angling. A commercial license is required when any marine species is sold and when more than the recreational bag limits are in possession of the angler. Selling fish without a commercial permit is prohibited. There are regulations covering size, bag limits, possession limits and methods of fishing for, but not limited to the following species: Atlantic Salmon, Atlantic Bluefin Tuna, Sturgeon, Striped Bass, Bluefish, Cod, Haddock, Halibut, Pollack, Redfish, Smelt, Winter/ Summer Flounder, Sharks. Current saltwater fishing information can be obtained by contacting the Recreational Marine Fisheries Program, Maine DMR, PO Box 8, West Boothbay Harbor, ME 04575. Telephone: (207) 633-9500.

Freshwater fish (brown trout, black bass-largemouth and smallmouth, black crappie, rainbow trout, chain pickerel, and landlocked salmon) regulations in coastal waters: all rules governing methods of taking, size, bag, and possession limits conform with the general law open water fishing regulations found in this book, except that the minimum length limit on brown trout and rainbow trout in coastal waters is 14 inches. It is unlawful to fish for or take freshwater fish by any means other than hook and line. It is unlawful to snag freshwater fish.

Atlantic Salmon: The angling season for Atlantic salmon in Maine is CLOSED YEAR ROUND until further notice. It is unlawful, by State of Maine mandate, to angle, take or possess any Atlantic salmon from all Maine waters (including coastal waters). Atlantic Salmon are regulated by the Atlantic Salmon Commission, 650 State Street, Bangor Mental Health Facility, Bangor, ME 04401; (207) 941-4449. Information regarding Atlantic salmon can be obtained directly from the Commission.

Atlantic Bluefin Tuna are regulated by the Federal Government. Permit information can be obtained from the National Marine Fisheries Service, Atlantic Tuna Program, Northeast Regional Office, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298; Phone: 888-872-8862.

Sturgeon: It is unlawful to take, catch, possess, or destroy any shortnose or Atlantic sturgeon from the coastal waters of Maine.

Striped Bass: Maine's striped bass regulations cover all Maine coastal waters up to the head of tide in all rivers. In addition, there are special regulations in effect on some rivers. Contact the Department of Marine Resources for current size restrictions, season dates, and bag limits. Gear restrictions: Gear is restricted to hook and line only. Use of a gaff to land a striped bass is illegal.

All too frequently anglers ignore the Augusta area when they are considering a destination for a fishing trip. They do so at their peril! The Belgrade Region, in which our state capitol is located, contains some of the finest fishing in the state. This is particularly true in the case of warm water fish species such as smallmouth and largemouth bass and that popular newcomer, the Northern pike. Fishery Region B is bounded on the West by the Androscoggin River and on the East by the Penobscot River. The Region's "southern" boundary is, of course, the Atlantic Ocean; its northern boundary approximates a line drawn from Livermore Falls through Skowhegan, Harmony and Dexter.

... LET'S TALK FISH....

Brook Trout



Common Name: Eastern Brook Trout

Other Names: Squaretail, Brookie, Speckled Trout

Scientific Name: *Salvelinus fontinalis*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Size varies greatly, depending on water temperature, productivity, and food sources. The statewide average length of 3 year-old brook trout in Maine lakes is 13.3 inches. However, same age trout from different lakes range from 7.5 to 17.5 inches in length. Stream populations are typically slower growing than lake populations. Some high elevation trout populations mature and reproduce at lengths smaller than 6 inches.

Identification: Color is variable, depending on habitat. Brook trout can be distinguished from other members of the trout family by the dark, wavy, worm-like line on their back and the white leading edges of their fins, including the tail.

Brown Trout



Common Name: Brown Trout

Other Names: German Brown Trout, Brownie, Loch Leven Trout, Saibling

Scientific Name: *Salmo trutta*

Origin: Introduced

Adult Size: Normal size is 14-20 inches and 1-2 pounds. Browns occasionally reach 10 pounds.

Identification: Usually coloration is light brown or tawny with pronounced black spots on the back, sides and head. Spots are often surrounded with reddish halo, along with reddish spots on the sides. Color is highly variable and browns are occasionally confused with landlocked salmon.

Lake Trout



Common Name: Lake Trout, Togue

Other Names: Laker, Grey Trout, Mackinaw

Scientific Name: *Salvelinus namaycush*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: In most waters, lake trout commonly reach lengths of 18 to 24 inches and weights of 2 to 4 pounds. They are among the longest lived and largest freshwater game fish, often living 20 years or more and attaining sizes of over 30 inches and 10 pounds.

Identification: Lake trout have a typical trout-shaped body covered with light spots on a darker background of green or grayish brown. They are closely related to the brook trout, but lack the bright coloration and can be distinguished by a deeply forked tail.

Landlocked Salmon



Common Name: Landlocked Atlantic Salmon

Other Names: Sebago Salmon, Quananiche

Scientific Name: *Salmo salar*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Average size is 16-18 inches and 1-1 1/2 pounds, but 3-5 pound fish are not uncommon.

Identification: Adults are generally silvery with a slightly forked tail and small X-shaped markings on the back and upper sides. Juvenile salmon have a dark red spot between each pair of parr marks. Mature males develop a "kype", or hooked jaw, during the spawning season.

Rainbow Trout



Common Name: Rainbow Trout

Other Names: Bows

Scientific Name: *Oncorhynchus mykiss*

Origin: Introduced

Adult Size: Anglers normally catch fish in the 8 to 16-inch range, but occasionally fish up to 7 or 8 pounds are caught.

Identification: Coloration is highly variable depending upon size, sexual condition, and habitat. Dorsal surface ranges from a greenish yellow to a blue-gray color with silvery colored sides; and the belly area is white to pale yellow in color. Large numbers of relatively small black spots occur over the whole body, but spotting is generally heavier along dorsal areas. Rainbow trout are often recognized by a vague pink to prominent red colored band, which extends from the cheek to the base of the caudal fin.

Arctic Charr



Common Name: Landlocked Arctic Charr

Other Names: Charr, Blueback Trout, Silver Trout, Sunapee Trout, White Trout

Scientific Name: *Salvelinus alpinus oquassa*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Charr in Maine can live up to 15 years and attain a size of about 20 inches and 3 pounds. More often charr are much smaller; in some lakes the average size is closer to 6 inches and a few ounces in weight. A fish larger than 2 pounds is of significant size.

Identification: The charr is a slender member of the salmon and trout family. Usually dark on the back, lighter on the belly, and having light spots on the sides. Paired fins are orange to red with a bright white leading edge. Tail is moderately forked. During breeding season, both sexes become highly colored. Coloration can then range from pink to orange bellies, blue to brown backs, and creamy to orange spots. Fin colors can also become very intense during spawning.

Cusk



Common Name: Cusk

Other Names: Burbot, Lawyer Fish (Great Lake states), Freshwater Cod

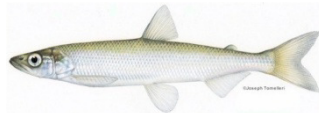
Scientific Name: *Lota lota*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Sexual maturity is usually attained during the third or fourth year. Males often mature at a smaller size than females. Aged (otoliths) Maine cusk average 18 inches and 24 ounces in their eighth year of growth, 20 inches and 32 ounces in their tenth year, and 24 inches and 62 ounces in their thirteenth year. The largest angler-caught cusk recorded in Maine was 18 pounds 8 ounces.

Identification: Cusk have an elongated body with a broad, flattened triangular head. The mouth is large and wide. A single chin barbel adorns the lower jaw. Scales are small and embedded giving burbot the appearance of being slimy. The anal and dorsal fins run nearly half the length of the body. In Maine, coloration ranges from a tan to dark brown background overlaid with dark brown to black mottling or spots. Some may be uniformly dark brown or black.

Rainbow Smelt



Common Name: Rainbow Smelt

Other Names: Smelt, Freshwater Smelt, American Smelt

Scientific Name: *Osmerus mordax*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Maine smelt can reach a wide variety of sizes. In many lakes smelt grow to a maximum size of 3-5 inches, depending on food, competition, and growing conditions. Smelt in northern Maine lakes commonly average 6-8 inches in length, and some Maine lakes grow smelt as large as 14 inches.

Identification: Their body is long and slender with a large elongated, pointed mouth. They have strong conical teeth on jaws and tongue, with fewer than 75 scales along lateral line. Color is silver with a green back, and iridescent purple, pink, and blue reflections on the side. An adipose fin is present.

Lake Whitefish



Common Name: Lake Whitefish

Other Names: Whitefish

Scientific Name: *Coregonus clupeaformis*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Whitefish are normally 14-20 inches long and weigh 1-3 pounds, but can reach lengths of 25 inches and over 6 pounds. A number of lakes contain populations of "dwarf" size fish where mature adult whitefish attain lengths of only 6-8 inches.

Identification: Overall coloration is silvery dark brown to black on the back, becoming silvery on the sides and silvery white below. The fins are generally black or black tipped. Scales are large. The body is somewhat laterally compressed. Lake whitefish are easily distinguished from fallfish (chub) by having a small mouth and the presence of a small adipose fin located on the back between the dorsal and caudal fins.

Round Whitefish



Common Name: Round Whitefish

Other Names: Frostfish, Round Fish, Menominee Whitefish

Scientific Name: *Prosopium cylindraceum*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Round whitefish are relatively long-lived with individuals up to 8 years of age common in most lake populations. Growth tends to be slower than that of lake whitefish and few individuals seen greater than 18 inches. Lengths usually range from 10-14 inches.

Identification: Round whitefish are noticeably cylindrical in body shape. They are dark brown on the back fading to silvery sides and silvery-white below. Pectoral and pelvic fins are typically light orange in color. Scales are large. An adipose fin, characteristic of members of the Salmonid family, is located on the back between the dorsal and caudal fins. The mouth is small and toothless as adults.

Largemouth Bass



Common Name: Largemouth Bass

Other Names: Black Bass, Largemouth

Scientific Name: *Micropterus salmoides*

Origin: Introduced

Adult Size: The typical largemouth bass in Maine is 12-16 inches long and weigh 1-3 pounds, with occasional fish up to 7-8 pounds.

Identification: Largemouths are dark olive green on the back with light green sides shading to a white belly. A dark mottled band extends along the sides. The upper part of the mouth extends past the eye. Smallmouth bass are similar in appearance, but the upper jaw ends below the eye.

Smallmouth Bass



Common Name: Smallmouth Bass

Other Names: Smallie, Smallmouth Black Bass, Black Bass, Brown Bass, Green Bass

Scientific Name: *Micropterus dolomieu*

Origin: Introduced

Adult Size: Smallmouth bass commonly live 5-7 years, with a few individuals reaching ages from 10-20 years. Most bass waters grow some adults to weights of 2-3 pounds. In Maine, only a few exceed 4 pounds, and bass heavier than 5 pounds are rare. The state record smallmouth bass is 8 pounds.

Identification: Bass are members of the sunfish family. The upper jaw of smallmouth bass does not extend beyond the back of the eye. The notch between the spiny and the soft-rayed section of the dorsal fin is not deep.

Northern Pike



Common Name: Northern Pike

Other Names: Pike, Northerns

Scientific Name: *Esox lucius*

Origin: Introduced

Adult Size: Sexual maturity is generally reached between 3-5 years of age, at which time pike may average between 24-30 inches long and weigh 3.5 to 7.5 pounds. Pike exceeding 30 pounds have been caught in Maine.

Identifications: Scales are present on the upper half of the gill cover, but are absent on the lower half. The cheek area (located just forward of the gill plate), is fully scaled. Pike usually have five pairs of sensory pores along the underside of the lower jaw. The cheeks and gill covers of chain pickerel are fully scaled, and generally only four pairs of sensor pores are present on the lower jaw. The pattern of markings is typically very different on adult and juvenile pike. Juvenile pike possess wavy, white to yellow vertical bars. Adults have shorter markings arranged in a more horizontal configuration. Pike can hybridize with chain pickerel, and the resulting hybrid may possess markings common to either or both species.

Chain Pickerel



Common Name: Chain Pickerel

Other Names: Pickerel, Chainsides, Eastern Pickerel

Scientific Name: *Esox niger*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Most of the pickerel caught in Maine are age 3-5, at which time they range in length from 14-19 inches. Productive waters grow good numbers of 2-3 pound fish, along with occasional 4 pound fish. The state record, caught in 1992, weighed 6 pounds, 13 ounces.

Identification: Pickerel are a member of the pike family. The fish is green with the sides prominently marked by yellow-green areas broken by dark, interconnecting lines resembling the links of a chain. The jaws are elongated containing large, sharp teeth; the large dorsal fin is located way back towards the caudal fin, which is forked.

Black Crappie



Common Name: Black Crappie

Other Names: Calico Bass, Crappies

Scientific Name: *Pomoxis nigromaculatus*

Origin: Introduced

Adult Size: Sexual maturity is reached between 2 and 4 years of age, at which time crappies may be 6 to 10 inches long. Typical crappie fisheries produce fish between 6 and 11 inches long, although crappies exceeding 14 inches and 3 pounds have been caught in Maine.

Identification: Closely resembling bass and sunfish species, which have 10-12 dorsal fin spines, crappies possess 6-8 dorsal fin spines. Body form is very deep and narrow (laterally compressed). Coloration is silvery-olive to golden brown, with an irregular mosaic of dark black blotches.

Muskellunge



Common Name: Muskellunge

Other Names: Musky, Maskinonge

Scientific Name: *Esox masquinongy*

Origin: Introduced

Adult Size: Muskellunge commonly grow to lengths of 30 to 36 inches and weights of 5 to 10 pounds, with occasional larger individuals. Females attain larger sizes than males. The largest muskellunge recorded in Maine weighed 22 pounds, 12 ounces.

Identification: Muskellunge are long, slender fish with dark vertical bars on a background ranging from light green to light brown. They have soft-rayed fins, with the dorsal fin located just in front of the tail. Their large mouths, full of sharp teeth, leave no doubt as to their predatory nature. Muskies can be distinguished from northern pike by the presence of 7 to 11 sensory pores on the underside of each jaw (pike have only 5), and by cheeks and gill covers scaled only on the upper half (the cheeks of pike are fully scaled).

White Perch



Common Name: White Perch

Other Names: Perch, Silver Perch

Scientific Name: *Morone americana*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Size can vary greatly according to the type of habitat and the density of the perch population. A 6-year old perch can be anywhere from 6 to 12 inches long. The average 8 to 10 inch perch weighs about 0.45 pounds and is about 4 years old.

Identification: The white perch is a spiny-finned fish with large, easily seen scales. The fish is dark gray-green on the back and upper sides and the color gradually changes to silver on the sides below the lateral line to white on the belly. In clear waters, the white perch exhibits a bluish tint on the lower jaw.

Yellow Perch



Common Name: Yellow Perch

Other Names: Perch, Lake Perch, American Perch

Scientific Name: *Perca flavescens*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Yellow perch normally range from 6 to 12 inches in length and weigh from 1/4 to 1 pound. Larger yellow perch, up to 15 inches and 1.6 pounds, are occasionally caught in Maine.

Identification: The top of the head and back is bright green to olive in color; sides are yellowish-green to golden yellow with 6 to 8 dark vertical bands; belly area ranges from yellow to white; pectoral, pelvic and anal fins vary in color from pale yellow to bright orange.

Brown Bullhead



Common Name: Brown Bullhead

Other Names: Bullhead, Hornpout, Catfish

Scientific Name: *Ameiurus nebulosus*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: In Maine, adult bullheads are usually about 10 inches long and weigh less than one pound. Fish up to 14 inches are occasionally caught, but fish 18 inches and larger are rare in Maine.

Identification: As the name implies, the brown bullhead is dark brown to olive green on the back, with mottled sides, and a creamy white belly. Individuals having white patches on their sides and back are common in some Maine waters. Brown bullheads have a thick rounded body, a broad, somewhat flattened head with a distinctive set of "whiskers" around the mouth called barbels. The dorsal and pectoral fins have sharp saw tooth spines at their base that can be locked in an erect position. The caudal fin is square and there is a pronounced adipose fin. They have no scales on their skin.

Pumpkinseed Sunfish



Common Name: Pumpkinseed Sunfish

Other Names: Pumpkinseed, Common Sunfish, Punky

Scientific Name: *Lepomis gibbosus*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Size is typically between 6 and 10 inches in Maine.

Identification: The pumpkinseed is a very deep-bodied fish, almost disclike, with several spines in the dorsal fin. The lateral view varies from golden brown to olive on top to irregular, wavy, interconnecting blue-green lines in the middle, to bronze or red-orange on the ventral surface. The side of head and body have blue, emerald, or green reflections. The opercle, or gill-cover, is mostly black with a trailing tip that is black and rimmed with a small halfmoon of bright red.

Redbreast Sunfish



Common Name: Redbreast Sunfish

Other Names: Yellowbelly Sunfish, Longear Sunfish

Scientific Name: *Lepomis auritus*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Size is typically between 5 and 7 inches in Maine

Identification: The redbreast sunfish is very deep-bodied and strongly compressed laterally. The opercle, or gill cover, is long and black with no colored border. The body is usually golden brown to olive, with the dorsal surface darker. Sides are lighter in color with small reddish spots, vague blue streaks, and a yellow to orange-red breast.

American Eel



Common Name: American Eel

Other Names: Common Eel, Freshwater Eel

Scientific Name: *Anguilla rostrata*

Origin: Native

Adult Size: Adult females may reach a size of up to 6 feet, but normally attain a length between 2 to 3-1/2 feet in length. Males do not attain the large size of females, usually growing to 1-1/2 to 2 feet in length. Recent research has shown that most all eels over 16 inches long are females, and most eels under 16 inches are males.

Identification: A very characteristic snake-like body sets the eel apart from all other Maine fish. Eels are distinguished by true jaws, pectoral but no pelvic fins, and a thick skin with a heavy slime layer. Coloration is olive-green to brown on the back, with yellow-green on the sides and gray-white below. As sexually mature adults leave freshwater to go to the ocean to spawn, eels transform to "silver eels", being black above and silver below.