

# NORTHERN PIKE

*Esox lucius*



In the past, pike were considered trash fish to be disposed of right away. Now they are one of Manitoba's most sought after trophies. Anglers from all over North America come to Manitoba each year and catch hundreds of Master Angler size pike. Our record is a whopping 19 kg, caught in 1989. Pike also continue to be an important commercial species in Manitoba.

Northern pike have several close relatives, only one of which, the muskellunge, is occasionally found in Manitoba. Pike are easily identified by their torpedo shape; cream-coloured, kidney-shaped spots on a dark background; and large alligator mouth with rows of sharp teeth. Muskellunge lack the cream spots and have scales on the upper part of the cheek, while pike have a fully scaled cheek.

Pike are found in almost all waters of the province, from the warm, muddy, sluggish streams of the south to the crystal-clear, cold lakes of the north. Even with this expansive range, populations can be affected by the loss of marshes, increased turbidity, or barriers to migration.

Before the ice is gone in spring, adult pike move into heavily vegetated areas of lakes and rivers to spawn. The eggs hatch in about 12 days, and the young almost immediately begin to feed on any living thing, including each other. They continue such voracious habits throughout their life, feeding on fish and other animals.

Pike are solitary fish lurking at the edge of weed beds ready to attack and devour anything passing by. As a result any moving bait, from a streamer fly to minnows, plugs, spinners, and spoons, will catch pike.

warm water species