



**Very High Risk / Impact**  
**in all regions of the Okanagan**

*Poses a significant threat and does NOT  
presently occur in the region.*

## Northern Pike

*Esox lucius*

**AKA: Great Northern Pike, Jack, Jackfish, Pickerel, Pike, Great Northern Pickerel, Common Pike**

### DESCRIPTION

- Long, streamlined body and a flat, pointed snout that resembles a duck's bill
- Mouth is large and filled with sharp teeth
- Dorsal (back) fin quite far down their length, close to their tail fin and mirrored by their anal fin
- Color ranges from brown to olive-brown to bright green, with white blotches along their flanks
- Underside is cream-colored to white
- Grows on average to 50-75 cm in length and 0.9-2.3 kg in weight

The Northern Pike is a species of carnivorous fish of the genus *Esox* (the pikes). In Britain, Ireland, most of Canada, and most parts of the USA, they are simply known as a "pike". They are well known as a commercial and sport fish. Northern pike are solitary fish but will follow schools of other fish during the winter months. They spawn in the spring immediately after ice melts and females can produce 15,000 – 60,000 eggs.



### LOOK-A-LIKE

The Northern Pike is often confused with its larger relative, the **Muskellunge** (*Esox masquinongy*). In comparison, the Northern Pike has light markings on a dark body background and fewer than six sensory pores on the underside of each side of the lower jaw, while the Muskellunge has seven or more sensory pores.



## HABITAT

Northern Pike are native in northern drainages of British Columbia; however, they are invasive to southern B.C. and have been confirmed in the Columbia River. The Northern Pike is a cool-water species and its habitat is usually slow, heavily vegetated rivers or the weedy bays of lakes. Breeding grounds include vegetated areas that flood only in the spring and early summer and may be dry the remainder of the year.

## IMPACT AND RISKS

- Usually solitary and highly territorial, the Northern Pike lurks at the edge of weed beds and attacks unwary creatures that enter its domain, such as fish, crayfish, frogs, mice, muskrats and young waterfowl. Pike are an opportunist species that can be best described as an omnivorous carnivore, as it feeds on whatever is most readily available.
- In most areas of Canada, the Northern Pike is both considered a commercial fish and a sport fish; however, in areas where it is Invasive, such as southern B.C., it is considered a nuisance because it devours large numbers of other game fish such as salmon, trout, bass and perch, introduces disease, and competes with other species for food.

## PREVENTION AND MITIGATION

- Recreational angling is overwhelmingly the number one reason for Northern Pike's introduction outside its native range in North America and Europe; angling now far outweighs commercial fishing for the species. Do not transport Northern Pike between lakes. Movement of live fish is prohibited in B.C.
- Check the BC Freshwater Fishing Regulations for your region as Northern Pike are native to northern drainages in B.C. and regulations vary by region.
- There have been ongoing suppression efforts of Northern Pike in the Lower Columbia River in B.C. using gillnetting. This method has been successful in removing large numbers of Northern Pike in other jurisdictions.
- Properly Clean, Drain, Dry your boat and equipment before entering a new water body.
  - **CLEAN** off all plant parts, animals, and mud from boat and equipment (e.g. boots, waders, fishing gear). Use a power wash station if available
  - **DRAIN** onto land all items that can hold water (e.g. buckets, wells, bilge, and ballast)
  - **DRY** all items completely before launching into another body of water
- Report Common Carp, or any other invasive species via the Report Invasives phone app, that is available from the provincial website: [www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species](http://www.gov.bc.ca/invasive-species)

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Northern Pike



Northern Pike - Sharp Teeth