



### Chinook Salmon

Also called king salmon, chinooks are the largest of the Pacific salmon, averaging 24-44 inches. They are the mainstay of the Lake Ontario fishery. Adult chinooks eat fish. Important sportfish, they are taken in open water by trolling plugs and spoons and using down riggers to get lures deep. Chinooks are also taken on trout or salmon egg sacs, lures and flies, fished in tributaries during fall spawning runs. +

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### Brown Trout

Originally from Europe, browns are large fish, averaging 8-20 inches in inland waters and 20-32 inches in the Great Lakes. They are more tolerant of warmer water than brook trout, and are found in waters across New York, but prefer cool streams and lakes. Adults eat aquatic insects and fish. Relatively wary, browns can be challenging to catch. They can be taken by casting or trolling flies, artificial lures, worms and minnows. +



### Rainbow Trout

Colorful, Pacific Coast natives, rainbows are quite variable in size, averaging 8-20 inches in inland waters, and 20-34 inches in the Great Lakes. Their name comes from the pink and red band often present on their sides, especially during spawning season. They prefer cool lakes and large streams. Adult rainbows eat aquatic insects and fish. A lake-run variety (called steelhead) occurs in lakes Ontario and Erie and their tributaries, and also in the Finger Lakes. Prized sportfish known for leaping, they are caught on flies, spoons, spinners and live bait. ▲



### Atlantic Salmon

New York's only native salmon, Atlantics are one of our most highly regarded sportfish. Adults average 12-30 inches and prefer open, deep waters of cold, deep lakes. They primarily eat fish. Also known as "landlocked salmon," New York's Atlantics spend their entire lives in fresh-water and are found in about 50 waters across the state, including Lake George, Schroon Lake, Lake Champlain and Cayuga Lake. Atlantics are caught by trolling streamer flies, spoons or plugs in open-water areas. +



### Lake Trout

Lakers average 15-24 inches long, but can reach weights exceeding 30 pounds, particularly in the Great Lakes. Silvery or dark grey, they occur in deep, cold, well-oxygenated lakes. A native of New York, lakers are long-lived, with some adults reaching 20 years old. Adult lakers primarily eat fish. Prized by anglers for their large size and strength, they are taken in early spring by trolling near the surface with artificial lures or minnows. In summer, anglers troll deep with downriggers. \*



### Brook Trout

Brookies average 9-15 inches long in ponds and 5-9 inches in streams. Also called speckled trout, they have a distinct bright white edging along their lower fins. New York's official state fish, brook trout live in small- to moderate-sized clear, cold streams, lakes and ponds. They primarily eat insects. Popular gamefish, they are relatively easy to catch, frequently taken on flies, small artificial lures, minnows and worms. +

## TROUT & SALMON

## PIKE & MUSKELLUNGE



### Chain Pickerel

Averaging 15-20 inches long, chain pickerel get their name from the dark, chain-link markings on their sides and backs. They are common in shallow, warm, weedy lakes throughout the state. The needle-sharp teeth in their large mouths are used for catching fish and some frogs. A favorite gamefish (especially with ice fishing anglers), they are caught on minnows, worms, spoons, spinners and jigs along weedbeds in shallow water. ○



### Muskellunge

The largest member of the pike family, muskies grow to be 30-60 inches long. They have a limited distribution in New York, found in a few cool lakes and large rivers, including the St. Lawrence River, Upper Niagara River and Chautauqua Lake. There are two strains in the state – Great Lakes and Ohio. Muskies have large, needle-sharp teeth that are used to grab food of fish, mice and ducks. Because of their large size, they are held in high regard by anglers who mostly practice catch-and-release fishing. Muskies are taken by trolling large plugs, spinners or baitfish. ○



### Northern Pike

Large fish, pike grow to be 25-40 inches long. Highly adaptable, they are one of the most widely distributed freshwater fish in the world. In New York, they prefer weedy portions of cool-water lakes, ponds and rivers, but large adults often move into deeper waters. The needle-sharp teeth in their large mouths help them catch fish, crayfish, frogs and ducklings. An important sportfish, anglers catch them near or in weedbeds with large spoons, spinners, plugs or baitfish. ○

**Freshwater Sportfish of New York**  
A Sampler

**NEW YORK STATE** | Department of Environmental Conservation



# Popular Warmwater Sportfish of New York



## Largemouth Bass

The largest member of the “sunfish” family, largemouth bass average 12-18 inches long, and have been known to reach weights in excess of 10 pounds. They are found among dense aquatic vegetation or close to submerged cover such as stumps, logs or dock pilings in warm, shallow, well-vegetated areas of lakes and rivers. They primarily eat fish, crayfish and frogs. A popular gamefish, largemouths are caught in weedy, stumpy areas by anglers still-fishing or casting with live bait or a wide variety of lures including plastic worms and surface plugs. ●

## Bluegill

Bluegills average 5-8 inches long. They are colorful fish, often mistaken for pumpkinseed, but lack the orange/red spot on the gill flap. Bluegills are found in warmwater lakes, ponds and rivers with plenty of vegetation or other shelter. They eat mostly insects and crustaceans. Popular panfish, they are caught in shallow water near weedbeds on worms, artificial flies or small lures. Bluegills are frequently stocked in farm ponds and other impoundments. ●



## Pumpkinseed

Averaging 6-8 inches in length, pumpkinseeds are colorful warmwater fish with a bright orange/red spot on the gill flaps. NY’s most abundant and widespread sunfish, they occur in shallow water in a variety of habitats from small lakes and ponds to shallow, weedy bays of larger lakes and quiet waters of slow-moving streams. Pumpkinseeds eat a wide array of prey such as insects, crustaceans and small fish. They are easily caught, and a favorite of small children. Anglers catch them in shallow water in sheltered areas on worms, small spinners and jigs. ●



## Rock Bass

Averaging 5-10 inches long, rock bass have bright red eyes that earned them the nickname “redeyes.” Found in waters across the state, they are most abundant in rocky, gravelly, shallow water areas of lakes and ponds, and lower, warm reaches of streams. They often occur with smallmouth bass. Rock bass eat mostly aquatic insects, crayfish and small fish. Popular panfish, fish along rocky areas and weeds using live bait, small spinners and plugs. ●



## Redbreast Sunfish

This sunfish grows 4-8 inches long, and gets its name from its bright yellow to orange-red breast. Redbreasts have long, narrow black gill covers. They are confined to eastern NY, inhabiting lakes and ponds, but preferring clear, slow-moving streams with sandy or rocky bottoms. They eat mostly insects and crustaceans, and also some small fish. Anglers catch them near weeds in shallow water on live bait. ●



## Smallmouth Bass

Members of the Sunfish family, smallmouth bass average 10-16 inches long. They prefer the cool, clear area of lakes and streams with gravelly or rocky bottoms. Adults usually stay near the protection of rocks and submerged logs. Smallmouths primarily eat fish, crayfish and insects. Important gamefish, they are famous for their fighting ability when hooked. Anglers still-fish with live bait near rocks, shoals and other structures, or cast spinners, plugs or jigs. ●



**Fish Spawning and Fishing Seasons - Setting legal fishing seasons for individual fish species is one method of protecting a fish population. Since fish are frequently congregated and particularly vulnerable during their spawning season, often the fishing season is closed to enable the fish to spawn safely. Knowing a fish’s spawning time and egg release method can help you understand how regulatory guidelines are determined. Fish, such as yellow perch, that randomly distribute large numbers of eggs, produce more young and may require less strict fishing regulations.**

- KEY**
- + Spawns in fall; female digs nest on gravelly area; covers eggs & departs
  - \* Spawns in fall; scatters eggs over shallow, rocky reefs; no care given
  - ▲ Spawns late winter-spring; female digs nest on gravelly area; covers eggs & departs
  - Spawns late spring-early summer; male digs nest in shallow water; guards eggs & young

- Spawns in spring; scatters eggs over vegetation (walleye over gravel bars); no care given
- Spawns in spring; deposits long string of eggs (up to 7ft); no care given
- ❖ Spawns late spring-early summer; scatters eggs over vegetation; no care given



## Walleye

The largest member of the perch family, walleye average 13-25 inches long. They are found in every major watershed in NY, preferring deep water sections of large lakes, streams and rivers. Most active at night, walleye use their large, light-sensitive eyes and large canine teeth to locate and catch their favorite food of fish. Popular sportfish, anglers catch them by drifting, casting, or trolling with live bait, jigs, spinners and plugs. ○

## Black Crappie

Black crappie average 8-12 inches long. With the exception of the Adirondacks, they are common in waters across the state. They prefer shallow, relatively weedy waters and eat small fish and insects. Popular panfish, anglers catch them along rocky areas and in shallow coves on minnows, worms and spinners. ●



## Brown Bullhead

Averaging 8-14 inches in length, brown bullheads are easily recognized by their broad, flat heads and dark barbels (whiskers). They have sharp spines on their dorsal and pectoral fins. Very adaptable, they are the most common catfish in NY, found in cool Adirondack lakes, but most abundant in warmwater ponds, lakes and larger, slow-moving streams. Nighttime bottom feeders, bullhead use their barbels to locate food, including insects, snails, worms and small fish. They are popular panfish, especially in the spring. Anglers fish using worms, minnows and doughballs along the bottom in evening. ●



## Yellow Perch

Growing 8-12 inches in length, perch are easily distinguished by the 5-9 black vertical bars on their yellow sides. They are common across NY, found in a variety of habitats, but preferring shallow, weedy, protected sections of rivers, lakes and ponds. Perch eat a variety of organisms including aquatic insects, crayfish and fish. Relatively easy to catch, they are often one of the first fish caught by anglers, and are popular with ice-fishing anglers. Perch are generally caught along weedbeds and drop-offs on minnows, worms, grubs and a variety of small lures. □

## White Perch

New York’s smallest member of the temperate bass family, white perch average 6-12 inches long. Able to live in both fresh and saltwater, they are native to brackish water, but also occur in rivers, lakes and reservoirs. In NY, they are found in the Hudson River, the Great Lakes and the Seneca, Mohawk and Allegheny River systems. White perch often occur in large schools in turbid, shallow areas. Adults eat fish and insects. Anglers catch white perch by still-fishing with worms or grubs or casting small lures. ❖



## Common Carp

Large fish, carp average 20-30 inches long, but can grow to over 40 pounds in weight. They have large, heavy scales and two sharp barbels (whiskers). Carp occur in many of the state’s larger lakes and rivers. They prefer slow-moving water with a soft bottom. Adults eat a variety of plant and animal material, often stirring up a cloud of mud as they feed. First brought here from Asia as a food fish, they offer a different angling experience and fight hard on light tackle. ❖

