

Grass Pickerel

Scientific Name: *Esox americanus vermiculatus*

Class: Osteichthyes

Order: Salmoniformes

Family: Esocidae



Grass pickerel have a elongated, oval body that is dark olive to black on top and a white belly. They have dark wavy lines on their sides with gray fins. It has a large mouth with well developed teeth. It can grow up to ten inches and weighs up to half a pound. It is a carnivorous fish. It is also called a grass pike, little pickerel, or the pickerel. The species is considered stable. Current threats include fishing, channelization, and riparian habitat removal.

Range

Grass Pickerel range is from eastern United States at the St. Lawrence River drainage to the Finger Lakes in Florida. They exist mainly west of the Appalachian mountain chain.

Habitat

The grass pickerel prefers sluggish habitat, such as pools of streams, weed beds along stream shores, or among fallen woody debris such as tree limbs; lowland areas, may be found in ditches and sloughs.

Gestation

8-15 days

Litter

186 – 542 eggs

Behavior

The grass pickerel is an ambush predator, darting out of vegetation to attack its prey. They are solitary and come together only to breed. It is not considered a sport fish because of its small size.

Reproduction

In the spring the pickerel migrates upstream to spawn. In shallow water the eggs are laid. They are yellow and are released over submerged vegetation. They are then abandoned as there is no defense for them or care provided. They are sexually mature around two years of age.

Wild Diet

Diet includes other fish, crayfish, aquatic insects and their larvae.