

northern pike *Esox lucius*

Kingdom: Animalia

Division/Phylum: Chordata

Class: Osteichthyes

Order: Esociformes

Family: Esocidae

ILLINOIS STATUS common, native

FEATURES

The northern pike's average life span is eight to 10 years. The average weight is two pounds. It may attain a maximum length of 53 inches. The fins are rounded, and all except the pectoral fins have dark spots. Scales are present on the cheek and half of the gill cover. The eyes are yellow. The long, green body has yellow spots on the sides. The belly is white to dark yellow. The duckbill-shaped snout is easily seen.

BEHAVIORS

The northern pike lives in lakes, rivers and marshes. It prefers water without strong currents and with many plants. This fish reaches maturity at age two to three years. Spawning occurs in March. The female deposits up to 150,000 eggs that are scattered in marshy areas or other shallow water areas. Eggs hatch in 12-14 days. This fish eats fishes, insects, crayfish, frogs and reptiles.

HABITATS

Aquatic Habitats

lakes, ponds and reservoirs; rivers and streams; marshes

Woodland Habitats

none

Prairie and Edge Habitats

none

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