

NORTHERN PIKE

(*Esox lucius*)

**Oneida Lake Status:
Uncommon**



Northern pike in a pond



*Northern pike is a prized sport fish:
Photo courtesy of Captain Tony Buffa*



Line drawing of a northern pike

- Large Oneida Lake game fish
- Voracious Oneida Lake predator
- Prized target of Oneida Lake anglers in winter

Northern pike have dark green to brown bodies with gold colored markings on both sides of the head. Unlike the pickerels, northern pike have no scales on the lower half of the gill cover and have no dark bar beneath the eye. In Oneida Lake northern pike may grow to 40 inches in length, and may weigh as much as 17 pounds.

Northern pike are one of the most widely distributed freshwater fish in the world, and the only pike that occurs in arctic environments. Northern pike prefer weedy sections of Oneida Lake, but large adults tend to move offshore to deeper water. Their classic “torpedo” shape makes the northern pike specialized for ambushing large fish, and they often eat fish that appear too large for them. On Oneida Lake, northern pike enjoy a diet of walleye, yellow perch, smallmouth bass, and white bass, but have also been known to eat the occasional frog, mouse, muskrat, or duck.

Northern pike are among New York’s most important sport fish, and Oneida Lake anglers have a rich history with this fish. Northern pike are easy to catch and they put up a good fight when hooked. They remain active through winter, and ice derbies are common in the central New York area.

Northern pike were abundant in Oneida Lake before the 1950’s, however, the loss of marsh and wetland spawning habitat has led to major population decreases.



A good day’s catch

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