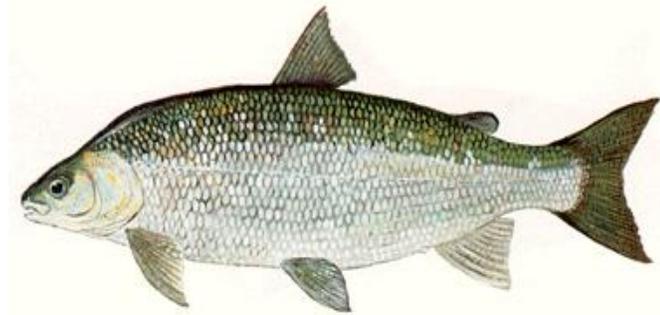


# Lake Whitefish

*Coregonus clupeaformis*

**Identifying characteristics: (Native Fish) Two dorsal fins including one adipose fin, blunt nose, fins clear or nearly so, greenish brown back, silver sides.**



Lake whitefish, a pale, shy member of the trout/salmon family Salmonidae, has long been a mainstay of the commercial catch in the Great Lakes because of its exceptional flavor, convenient size, and habit of schooling. Until recently, few sport anglers had discovered the

special techniques required to catch lake whitefish, but this situation is changing, and any angler who has learned to fish whitefish successfully will find it well worth the effort.

The reclusive lake whitefish prefers to swim in the company of a school of fellow whitefish in the gloomy, cool water of the Great Lakes at depths of up to 200 feet and deeper as summer's heat climbs, the main reason it requires extra skill to catch one. The whitefish spawns in early winter in shallow rock or sand bottomed lake waters less than 25 feet deep. The young hatch the following spring, and grow large enough to leave the protective shallows for deeper waters by early summer. Whitefish generally grow rapidly, but this varies by region and food supply. Lake whitefish can reach a size of more than 20 pounds and an age of over 25 years, although this was more commonplace 50 years ago. Although depletion of whitefish stocks by over-fishing and environmental deterioration had drastically reduced commercial yields, environmental cleanup and careful fishery management of the late 1960s has largely remedied this.

Unlike its large-mouthed trout and salmon cousins, the lake whitefish has a small, exceedingly delicate mouth (another challenge for the angler) and it is therefore confined to dining on insects, freshwater shrimp, small fish and fish eggs, and bottom organisms. Most feeding takes place on or near lake-bottoms. Whitefish eggs are consumed by yellow perch, ciscoes, burbot, and even other whitefish. Young whitefish fall prey to lake trout, northern pike, burbot, walleye, and probably other fish-eating predators. Adults are taken primarily by man.