



# Muskellunge

## Esox masquinongy



### Physical Features

Muskies are the largest members of the pike family and are very similar in appearance to Northern Pike. General features include an elongated body, flat head and dorsal, pelvic and anal fins set far back on the body. Distinguishing characteristics include vertical dark bars on sides, scales only on top side of cheek, and six to eight pores on each side of lower jaw.

### Spawning

Muskies spawn when the water temperature increases to 50° and 59° F, normally from mid-April to late May. Female muskies lay 22,000 to 180,000 eggs in shallow, soft-bottomed bays that are covered in dead vegetation. Spawning lasts for several days but rarely more than a week. No parental care is taken after fertilization. These fish return to the same area each year to spawn. This is peculiar because they are thought to have migrated downstream from Minnesota Lakes when they first turned up in the river. Breeding grounds have obviously been established in the Red River.

### Interesting Facts

Did you know that muskies and northern pike are able to breed with each other? The result of this mix is what is known as a tiger musky.

### Habitat and Food

Underwater vegetation along with rock piles and fallen timber are a favorite of these large fish. The diet of the muskellunge consists of fish, crayfish, frogs, ducklings, snakes, muskrats, mice, other small mammals, and small birds. This exceptional predator depends primarily on its acute vision to capture its prey. The muskie's large mouth is lined with many large and hair-like teeth used to penetrate and aid in swallowing its prey head first.

### Angling Tips

These large predators are very elusive and hard to catch. Try large buck-tail spinners as well as large sucker minnows on or near weed beds. Muskies are valued as a trophy fish because of the challenge they present anglers with acrobatic leaping abilities and extreme strength. For many anglers, having a "follow" is considered a successful outing.

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### For More Information Contact:

River Keepers  
325 7th St S., Ste. 201  
Fargo, ND 58103-1846  
701-235-2895  
[www.riverkeepers.org](http://www.riverkeepers.org)