

# Species Profile \*\*

## Lake Whitefish

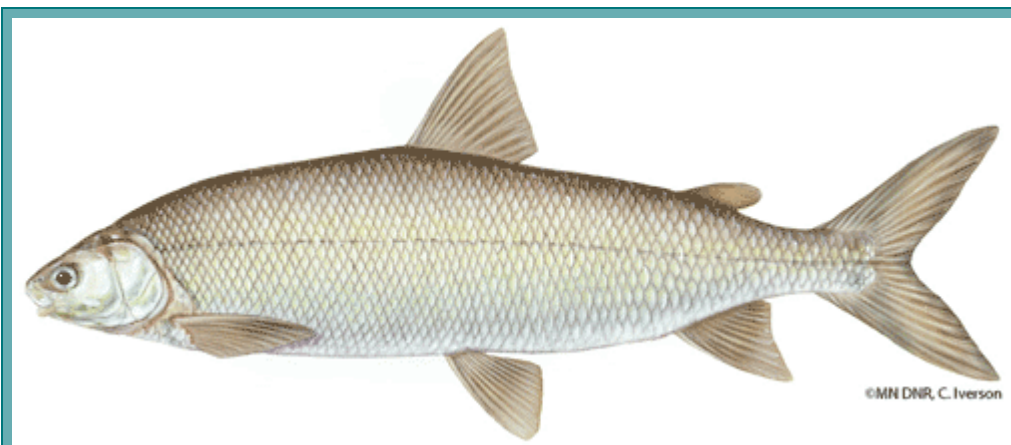
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### Lake Whitefish

*Coregonus clupeaformis* : *Coregonus* co-regg´-on-us) means "angel eye" in Greek *clupeaformis* (clue-pee-ah-form´-iss) means "herring shaped" in Latin




Lake Whitefish

### Identification

The lake whitefish is slender, elongated species with a mouth that is subterminal and a snout that protrudes beyond it. The tail is deeply forked and they have an adipose fin. Typically they are silvery to white in color with an olive to pale greenish-brown back. The fins are white and the tail has a dark-edge.



Adipose Fin

The lake whitefish is occasionally referred to as "humpback" because the head is small in relation to the length of the body. In order to correctly identify the lake whitefish utilize [Lesson 2:3 - Fish Families](#)  (23 pages | 3.4 MB) to learn about all the members of the Trout and Salmon Family.

### Food

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Midge Larva

The lake whitefish is a bottom dweller, so it stands to reason that they would eat things near the bottom of the lake. Young whitefish eat zooplankton and begin to include small bottom-dwelling insect larvae as they grow larger. Adult whitefish eat a lot of amphipods (scuds), fingernail clams, snails, opossum shrimp, midge larvae, and small fish.

## Reproduction

The spawning season for the lake whitefish is in the fall (usually mid-October to early December) when shallow water temperatures fall below 45° F. Spawning usually occurs at night over gravel, rubble, or small rocks near the shores of the lake or around islands. The fish swim up to the surface of the water and back down in twos, threes, or greater numbers releasing eggs and sperm. The fertilized eggs fall to the bottom and settle between the rock crevices. A single female can lay 10,000-130,000 eggs depending on her size. The embryos develop through the winter and hatch in early spring.

## Predators

Early in their lives, lake whitefish are eaten by lake trout, salmon, northern pike, walleye and burbot. In inland lakes their main predator as adults are humans. As adults in Lake Superior their main predator, besides humans, is the sea lamprey.

## Fishing and Handling

In spring, try using flies, small spinners, and jigs during insect hatches. There is a gill netting season in the fall, but be sure to check the DNR website for lakes and mesh sizes that you can use. In the winter, a spoon and a jig combination work well. Tie a flasher to your line so it is about 1 - 2 feet below the ice, then tie another 1-2 feet of line below it and put on a white colored jig or small minnow. Crappie minnows suspended under a bobber anywhere in the water column will bring strikes. They sometimes swim by right under the ice.

## Fun Facts

- Lake whitefish occur in Lake Superior and in many deep, cool-water lakes in northern Minnesota. They are present in many lakes in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area and in lakes of the Upper Mississippi River drainage. They require cool, well-oxygenated water in the summertime.
- The Anishinabe (Ojibwe) word for Great Lakes Whitefish is Adikameg
- The largest lake whitefish on record weighed a whopping 42.67 lbs, caught in Lake Superior in 1918. The Minnesota inland lake record is 12 lbs, 5 oz from Leech Lake in Cass County.
- "the whitefish is most esteemed for the richness and delicacy of its flavour, and there is a universal acquiescence in the opinion formerly advanced by Charlevoix, 'that whether fresh or salted, nothing of the fish kind can excel it'" Henry Schoolcraft 1820
- Fannie Farmer's 1918 Boston Cooking School cookbook calls whitefish "the finest fish found in the Great Lakes."

## Preparation for Cooking

Clean raw fish in preparation for cooking in the following manner.

1. Remove the head and carefully fillet the fish with a sharp, long-bladed knife, cutting along the backbone, belly and around the tail to end up with two fillets.
2. Trim the fat along the top center of each fillet.
3. Trim fat along edges.

Today many fish recipes available to prepare whitefish are found on the internet.