

# Stop

# The Invasion



Photographs courtesy of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife

## Northern Pike

*Esox lucius*



### What are they?

Northern pike are non-native predators of popular sportfish in Washington State. They are a prohibited species in Washington. They reproduce prolifically and primarily prey on fish smaller than themselves, including juveniles of other species.

### Are they here yet?

Yes. They have been introduced illegally and established populations in eastern Washington, in the Pend Oreille River, the Spokane River, Lake Roosevelt, and a couple lakes in Spokane County. Recently, northern pike have also been found in Lake Washington after being illegally introduced.

### Why should I care?

Northern pike harm ecosystems by preying on smaller fish, which suppresses the populations of those species and limits food sources for other species. If they reach the Columbia River via the Pend Oreille River, they could hurt populations of native salmon and steelhead trout by preying on the juveniles. For example, in Alaska, where northern pike have also been introduced illegally, they have badly hurt populations of native salmon.

### What should I do if I find one?

Report a sighting online at [www.invasivespecies.wa.gov/report.shtml](http://www.invasivespecies.wa.gov/report.shtml).

### How can we stop them?

Do not introduce northern pike into anywhere—it is illegal to do so. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife does encourage people to catch and kill them before leaving the area where they were caught (see [wdfw.wa.gov/ais/esox\\_lucius](http://wdfw.wa.gov/ais/esox_lucius) for more details). Gill netting has been the most effective method of reducing their populations so far.

## Report Sightings

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[invasivespecies.wa.gov](http://invasivespecies.wa.gov)

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*Photograph courtesy of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife*

## What are their characteristics?

- Elongated body shape.
- Large, wide mouth with sharp teeth.
- Dorsal fin far back, near tail fin.
- Body grey/green with rows of pale oval spots.

## How do I distinguish them from native species?

Tiger muskies, which are a sterile cross-breed of true muskies and northern pikes, are placed in rivers and lakes for sport fishing. Tiger muskies are patterned with darker vertical spots and bars on a lighter background. It is important to know the difference between tiger muskies and northern pike because they look similar but are subject to different fishing regulations.

## Where do I get more information?

- WDFW: [wdfw.wa.gov/ais/esox\\_lucius](http://wdfw.wa.gov/ais/esox_lucius)
- Alaska Fish and Game:  
<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=invasivepike.main>

**Report  
Sightings**

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