

# MUSKELLUNGE - NORTHERN PIKE

## Know How To Tell The Difference!



CLEAR

Paired fins having more pointed tips

Caudal fin with pointed tips

**NOTE:** Faint indication of marking pattern is sometimes present on posterior 1/3 of body in "clear" variation of muskellunge.

### MUSKELLUNGE (*Esox masquinongy*)

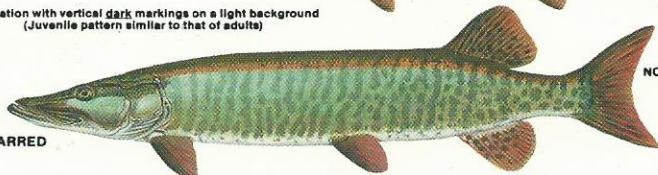
#### 3 COMMON PATTERN VARIATIONS

#### SPOTTED

Coloration with vertical dark markings on a light background (Juvenile pattern similar to that of adults)



#### BARRED



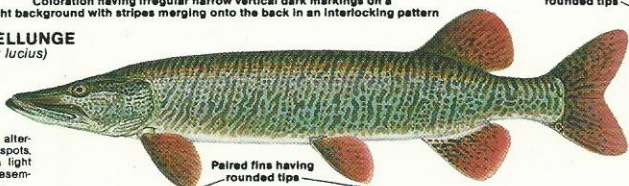
**NOTE:** Background colors of fish can vary slightly depending on environmental characteristics of the water body and its geographic location. One marking pattern may dominate in an area, but all 3 can be present.

Coloration having irregular narrow vertical dark markings on a light background with stripes merging onto the back in an interlocking pattern

Caudal fin with rounded tips

### HYBRID "TIGER" MUSKELLUNGE (*Esox masquinongy* X *Esox lucius*)

**NOTE:** Sides sometimes exhibit an alternating pattern of stripes and spots, or narrow paired-bars on a light background. Pattern never resembles that of northern pike.



Paired fins having rounded tips

Coloration with pattern of horizontal rows of light round to oval spots on a dark background

Caudal fin with more rounded tips

### NORTHERN PIKE (*Esox lucius*)

(Juvenile pattern has white, oblique bars which extend from the white belly)

**NOTE:** Some areas may contain "Silver Pike" which is a mutant color variation of northern pike that lack the characteristic spots and have dark to light greys/blues sides. Fin coloration normal for northern pike is exhibited in the "silver" variety.



Paired fins having more rounded tips

Color illustrations by:  
**IANE BECK ©86**

**IN MOST AREAS THESE FISH HAVE MINIMUM SIZE RESTRICTIONS, MAXIMUM POSSESSION LIMITS, AND SPECIAL OPEN SEASONS... CONSULT LOCAL FISHING REGULATIONS FOR SPECIFIC DETAILS.**

Location of submandibular pores on under side of lower jaw...



**NORTHERN PIKE**  
5 or fewer pores

**MUSKELLUNGE**  
6 to 9 pores

**NOTE:** Hybrids have 5 to 8 pores on each side of lower jaw.

For further information please contact local, state, or provincial Natural Resources Offices, or...

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Line diagrams courtesy of Dr. James C. Underhill, University of Minnesota



**MUSKELLUNGE**

Upper half of cheek and operculum with scales



**NORTHERN PIKE**

Entire cheek and upper half of operculum with scales

**GANDER MOUNTAIN**

**NOTE:** Hybrids have 1/3 or more of cheek and upper half of operculum with scales.

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