

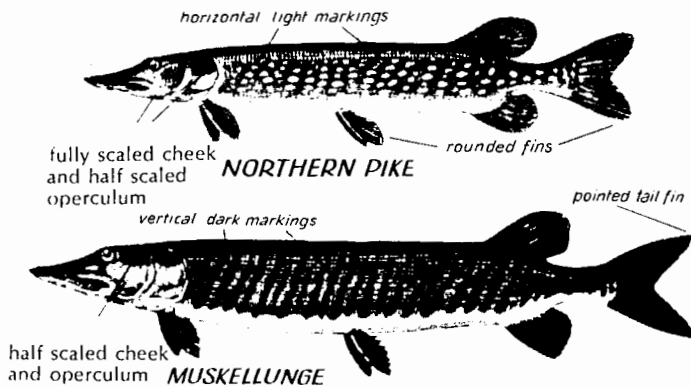
7/15/77

# Natural History Notes



MIKE DOMBECK grew up in the Moose Lake area and graduated from Hayward High School and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He has a B.S. degree in Biology and an M.S. degree in Aquatic Biology. He has taught Zoology at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and is presently a staff member of the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum of Natural History. Mike has also been an area fishing guide since his high school days.

## THE NORTHERN PIKE



and lower ends of its tail fin. These characteristics are very distinct and do not vary. Anglers who use body color or markings as identifiers are often mistaken since color and markings often vary from lake to lake and geographical area.

Known for its voracious feeding habits and curiosity, the northern pike's popularity as a game fish is continually increasing. Once shunned by fishermen, the northern pike now share equal popularity and esteem with other species of game fish. Being primarily a sight feeder, it strikes at almost anything that excites it. It often lies alongside a rock or log or in a weedbed waiting for moving prey. Then it furiously darts out, seizing its meal. The northern pike is basically a carnivore, feeding on all sizes of fish. Large individuals have been known to eat small muskrats and ducklings or even young of its own kind. They are often stocked in lakes with large populations of stunted crappie, bluegills and perch. Here the northern pike will quickly reduce the overpopulated panfish plus provide exciting fishing for the angler.

The northern pike is the best known and most widely distributed member of the pike family. It inhabits both rivers and lakes east of the Rocky Mountains and ranges north of the Ohio River drainage basin to Alaska. The northern pike is also abundant in many parts of Europe and Asia. More recently they have been introduced in the west from Montana to New Mexico and many areas of the south where they have successfully established themselves. This very adaptive species is able to inhabit a wide variety of aquatic areas which range from all eutrophic lakes to lakes as large as Lake Superior and also moderate to very large rivers.

Northern pike spawn in small streams or flooded grassy areas of lakes immediately after the ice melts in April or May. A very large female may lay over 100,000 eggs but the average 5-pound female usually lays half that amount. The newly hatched young feed on tiny crustaceans and other small zooplankton. Soon they begin feeding on small fish and may reach a length of 12 inches by the end of their first season. They are fierce competitors of the musky and most other carnivorous fish. The northern pike is at the pinnacle of the aquatic food chain and provides excellent food and hours of enjoyment for the fisherman.

The muskellunge and pickerel, also members of the pike family are the northern's closest relatives. The angler must constantly be aware of the species of fish that occur in the particular body of water he is fishing. Many fishermen pay the penalty for mistaking an undersize musky for the northern pike since the legal size limit of the musky in Wisconsin is 30 inches with a daily bag limit of 1 fish. In much of northwestern Wisconsin the legal size limit of the northern pike is 18 inches with a daily bag limit of 5 fish. If in doubt as to whether muskies or northern pike or both occur in a body of water, check with the area DNR officials or a knowledgeable local resident. Also be aware of all restrictions, since they often vary from lake to lake.

An angler should never misidentify an undersized musky for a northern pike, yet this often happens. Learn the following characteristics well and you will always be able to distinguish between the two. The musky has a half scaled cheek and gill cover or operculum, whereas the northern pike has a fully scaled cheek and half scaled operculum.

The musky has pointed upper and lower ends of its tail fin and the northern pike has rounded upper

On Main Street - Downtown Hayward  
Scheer's  
Open Evenings  
Sundays to 3 p.m.  
**NORTHWOODS SPORTS**  
Dick Scheer • Phone 634-8550

- FISHING TACKLE
- FISH LOCATORS
- GUNS - AMMUNITION
- ARCHERY
- ELECTRIC TROLLING MOTORS
- REEL PARTS & BULK LINE
- CYPRESS GARDEN WATER SKIS AND ACCESSORIES
- HERMAN BOOTS

The Largest Display of Mepps and Mr. Twister Baits in the North

**One Stop Shopping for the Sportsman**