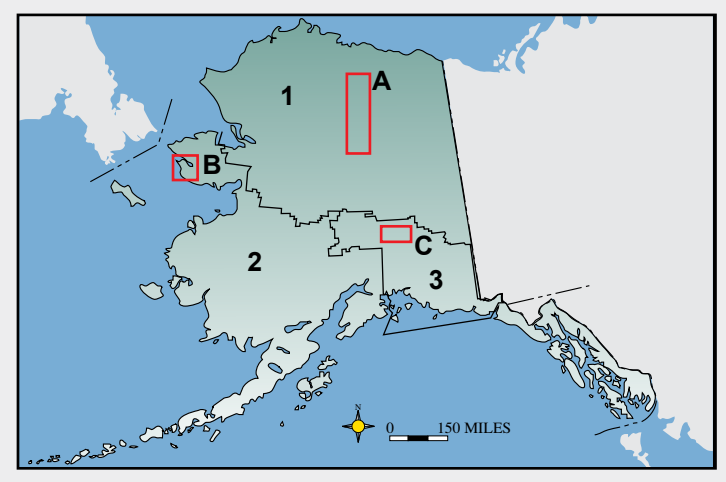
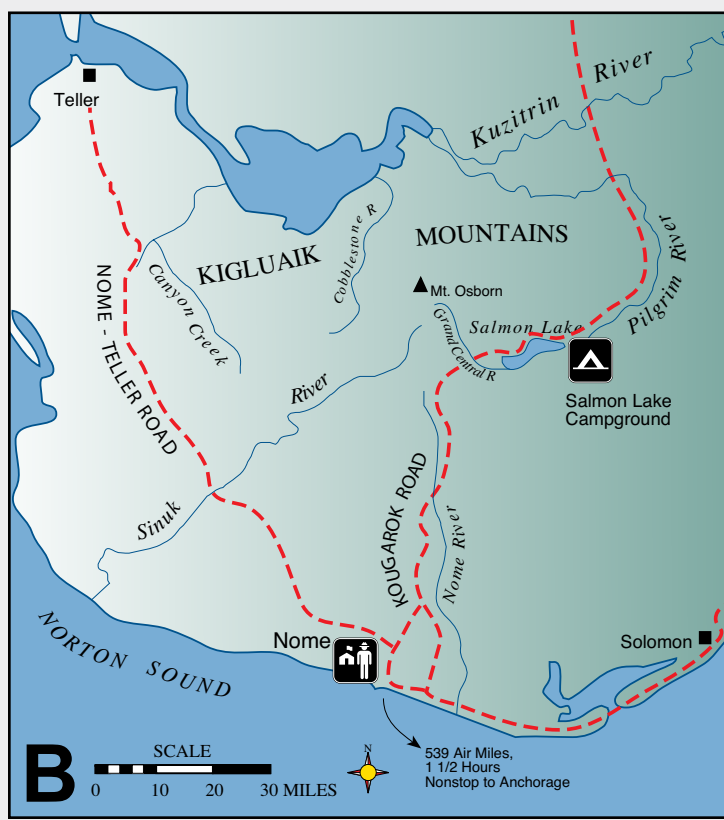


# Alaska Freshwater Fishing



WATER	BLM OFFICE	LOCATION	AC	AG	Bu	DV	LT	NP	RT	K	S	CO	P	CH	SF	NOTES
<b>Dalton Highway (listed south to north)</b>																
Yukon River	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 56	+	+	*			▲		●	■		▼	+		turbidity limits fishing in main stream; try tributaries and sloughs; can boat from Yukon River bridge to mouth
Ray River	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 70	+	+	*			▲								occasional burbot and white fish; access on SE side of bridge
Kanuti River	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 106	+	+	*			▲								also has whitefish
Fish Creek	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 114	+	+	*			▲								access on southeast side of bridge; some burbot, pike & whitefish
Bonanza Creek, South Fork	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 124.7	+	+	*			▲								occasional burbot, pike & whitefish
Bonanza Creek, North Fork	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 125.7	+	+	*			▲								whitefish, occasional pike; undeveloped campsite at Mile 135.7
Prospect Creek	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 135	+	+	*			▲								whitefish, occasional pike, burbot; best access near Mile 135.7&144
Jim River	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 135.7-144	+	+	*			▲								whitefish, occasional pike, burbot; best access near Mile 135.7&144
Grayling Lake	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 150.8	+	+	*			▲								also has whitefish
Koyukuk River, South Fork	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 156	+	+	*			▲								BLM campground at Mile 180
Marion Creek	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 180	+	+	*			▲								
Minnie Creek	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 187	+	+	*			▲								
Koyukuk River, Middle Fork	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 188.6	+	+	*			▲								launch rafts or canoes near Wiseman; water often silty
Tea Lake	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 270	+	+	*			▲								access west side near Pump Station 4
Galbraith Lake	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 274.7	+	+	*			▲								also has whitefish
Tootik Lake	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 284.3	+	+	*			▲								also has whitefish; no camping
Kuparuk River	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 289	+	+	*			▲								no camping
Okerukuyik Creek	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 298	+	+	*			▲								
Sagavanirktok River	Fairbanks	Dalton Highway MP 309 to Prudhoe Bay	+	+	*			▲								Dolly Varden fishing best in late summer
<b>Fish advisory:</b> north of the Yukon River, all rivers are closed to salmon fishing within 5 miles of the Dalton Highway (except for Ray River). Anglers may see king and chum salmon in the Koyukuk and Jim Rivers and Prospect Creek. North of Atigun Pass, only catch-and-release fishing is allowed for lake trout within 5 miles of the Dalton Highway.																
<b>Travel advisory:</b> be sure to park well off the Dalton Highway, but don't block gates to pipeline. This is an industrial highway with high speed truck traffic; windshield damage from flying gravel is common.																
<b>Other northern and northwestern locations</b>																
Anvik River	Anchorage	Anvik	+	+	*	■	▲			●	■		▼			air or boat access only
Boston Creek	Anchorage	tributary of the Fish River	+	+	*			○								air or boat access only
Elvik Lake	Fairbanks	150 miles northwest of Bettles	+	+	*			○								air access only
Fish River	Anchorage	tributary of Golovin Bay	+	+	*			○								air or boat access only
Grand Central River	Anchorage	Kougarak Road MP 35	+	+	*	■	▲									access via Kougarak Road or air
Kuzitrin River	Anchorage	Kougarak Road MP 75	+	+	*	■	▲									limited fishing for silvers and pinks
Nigu River	Fairbanks	150 miles northwest of Bettles	+	+	*	■	▲			●						air access only
Nome River	Anchorage	Kougarak Road MP 4	+	+	*	■	▲									road parallels river for 20 miles
Pah River	Fairbanks	tributary of the Kobuk River, east of Kotzebue	+	+	*	■	▲									air access from Bettles, Fairbanks, Kotzebue
Pilgrim River	Anchorage	Kougarak Road MP 45-65	+	+	*	■	▲									road parallels river for 20 miles
Salmon Lake	Anchorage	Nome-Taylor Highway MP 40	+	+	*	■	▲									BLM campground; access to Pilgrim River
Solomon River	Anchorage	Nome-Council Road MP 40	+	+	*	■	▲			●	*					
**Unalakleet River	Anchorage	Unalakleet	+	+	*	■	▲			●	*					
<b>Denali Highway (listed east to west)</b>																
Ten Mile Lake	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 10	+	+	*		○				*					access via 3-mile primitive road
Big Swede Lake	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 16	+	+	*		○									access via 3-mile primitive road
Little Swede Lake	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 16	+	+	*		○									enter via Tangle Lakes, exit at Richardson Highway
**Delta River	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 21	+	+	*		○									BLM campground and wayside
Tangle Lakes	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 23	+	+	*		○									access via 4-mile primitive road
*Landmark Gap Lake	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 24.6	+	+	*		○									park on north side of road
Rock Creek	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 25	+	+	*		○									
Fifty Mile Lake	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 50	+	+	*		○									
*Glacier Lake	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 30.6	+	+	*		○									
Sevensmile (Boulder) Lake	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 40	+	+	*		○									access via 3/4-mile gravel road
Crooked Creek	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 47.2	+	+	*		○									
Brushkana Creek	Glennallen	Denali Highway MP 104.5	+	+	*		○									BLM campground
<b>Interior</b>																
*Beaver Creek	Fairbanks	in White Mountains NRA, 60 mi. NE of Fairbanks	+	+	*		▲						▼	+		put-in at Nome Creek Road off Steese Hy. MP 57; air pickup
**Birch Creek	Fairbanks	in Steese NCA, 95 miles NE of Fairbanks	+	+	*		▲						▼	+		put-in Steese Hy. MP 94.5, exit MP 140 and 147
Black River	Fairbanks	50 air miles north of Eagle	+	+	*		▲			●						air access only; some whitefish
**Fairymile River	Fairbanks	large drainage basin between Tok and Eagle	+	+	*		▲									BLM campgrounds at MP 49 & 82
**Gulkana River	Glennallen	Richardson Highway north of Glennallen	+	+	*		▲			●	*					also has steelhead trout; BLM campgrounds & boat launch
Paxson Lake	Glennallen	Richardson Highway MP 175	+	+	*		○									BLM campground & boat launch
*Adjacent lands managed by the State of Alaska **National Wild and Scenic Rivers managed by BLM																



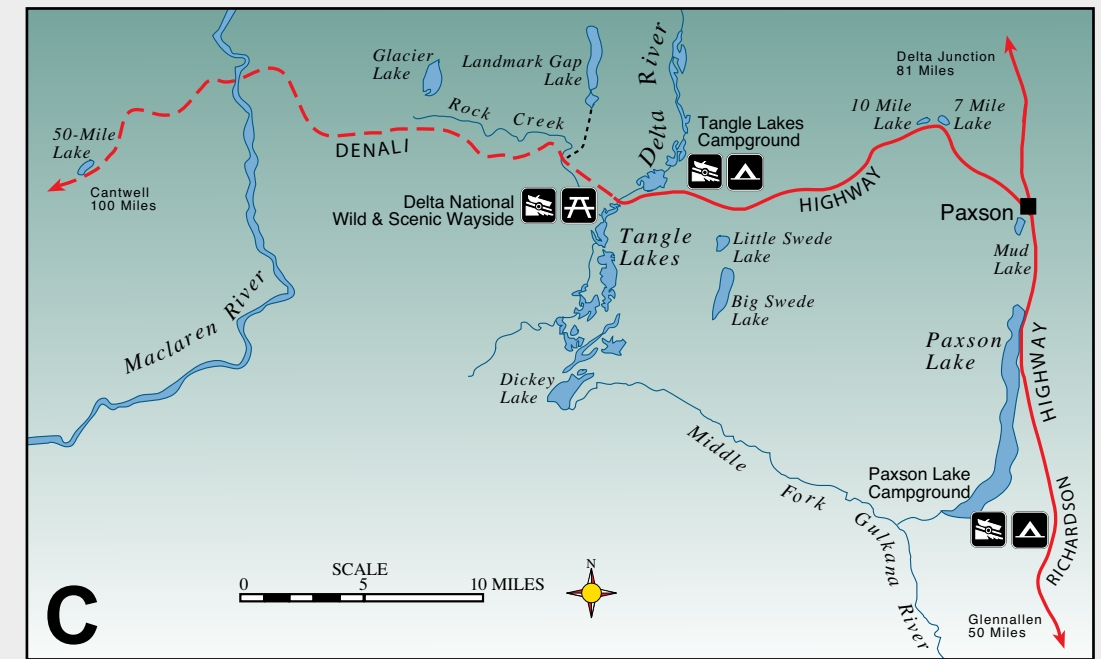
**Key for maps**  
 Note: Locator maps are intended for general planning purposes only; other facilities may be available in the area. You can obtain detailed information from BLM and others as your trip requirements become more clear.

- BLM office or information center
- BLM campground
- dump station
- picnic area

More than 130,000 miles of streams cross lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management in Alaska. The adjacent matrix is a partial list of some of the better or more accessible waters.

**Key to fish species:**

- AC arctic char
- AG arctic grayling
- Bu burbot
- DV Dolly Varden
- LT lake trout
- NP northern pike
- RT rainbow trout
- K salmon, chinook
- S salmon, sockeye
- CO salmon, coho
- P salmon, pink
- CH salmon, chum
- SF sheefish



- BLM offices in Alaska**  
[www.blm.gov/ak](http://www.blm.gov/ak)
1. Fairbanks District Office  
 1150 University Avenue  
 Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844  
 (907) 474-2251
  2. Anchorage Field Office  
 6881 Abbott Loop Road  
 Anchorage, AK 99507  
 (907) 267-1246  
[www.blm.gov/ak/ado](http://www.blm.gov/ak/ado)
  3. Glennallen Field Office  
 P.O. Box 952  
 Glennallen, Alaska 99588  
 (907) 822-3217  
[www.blm.gov/ak/gdo](http://www.blm.gov/ak/gdo)

## Before you go

**License Requirements**  
 An Alaskan sport fishing license is required annually and must be in the possession of all people 16 years of age or older while sport fishing, personal-use fishing and digging razor clams. (Residents 60 years of age or more may qualify for an exemption.) Anglers fishing for king salmon must also purchase a valid king salmon tag.

Licenses and tags may be purchased from license agents (most sporting goods stores) throughout the state, or by mail from:

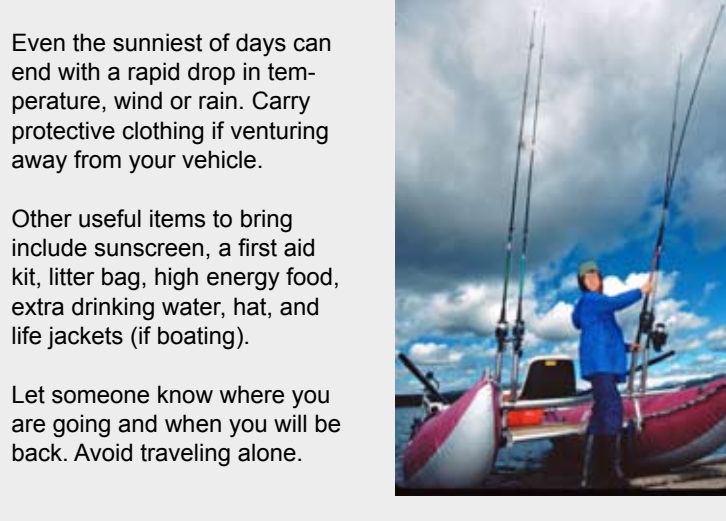
Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
 Licensing Section  
 P.O. Box 25525  
 Juneau, AK 99802-5525  
 Tel. (907) 465-2376

**Safety**  
 Even though air temperatures are warm in the summer, Alaska waters are cold! **Waders** are recommended if you want to get closer to the action.

Alaska **mosquitoes**, flies and other insects are legendary. Carry adequate repellent, head nets and bug jackets. Don't forget to supply the entire family.



(above) *The Seward Peninsula has many world class fishing opportunities.*



(above) *Combining a fishing trip with a river float trip can enhance your recreational experience. See the companion BLM recreational guide Alaska River Adventures.*

**Public access**  
 Alaska is a mixture of public and private land. Be sure you know who owns the land you want to recreate on. Obtain permission from private landowners before crossing or using land. For detailed land ownership and recreation easement information, contact any of the Bureau of Land Management offices in Alaska. Addresses are listed elsewhere in this publication.

**Road vs. fly-in**  
 Despite Alaska's great size, there are few roads in the state. Many of the most popular road-accessible fishing spots are often crowded in the summer, particularly on the weekends. You may wish to consider planning a fly-in fishing trip to a more remote area. Many airports have charter operators who can take you to uncrowded areas.

**When to go**  
 Timing is everything in Alaska sport fishing. For example, salmon return to freshwater during specific time periods. Contact a BLM office or the Alaska Department of Fish and Game for detailed information about runs.

**Catch and release**  
 In Alaska, many species of fish grow slowly and some may not reproduce annually. By properly releasing your fish, you can significantly improve the odds of your fish surviving. This can help improve the fishery for everyone.

Clip barbs off hooks on lures and flies; never use bait or stainless steel hooks. Bring in your catch quickly so that your catch is not exhausted. Never let the fish flop in shallow water, over rocks or on dry land.

Keep fish in water, cradling it gently under its belly and tail with your wet hands. Never touch the gills or squeeze the fish.

Remove the hook quickly and gently with long-nosed pliers or a hemostat, keeping the fish underwater. If the fish is deeply hooked, cut the line off at the hook.

Point the fish in to a slow current or gently move the fish back and forth until the gills work properly. Release the fish when it attempts to swim away.

Under State of Alaska regulations, it is illegal to remove a king salmon from the water for photographic or other purposes if you intend to release the fish. Refer to specific king salmon

handling requirements for Alaskan rivers you intend to fish.

**Care for your catch**  
 If you are keeping your fish, proper handling begins as soon as it is caught. The preferred method is to kill and clean your fish in the field immediately, then pack it in ice. This will keep the fish fresh until eating time.

Fish should not touch one another or be stored in melted

ice water. Never carry or store a fish in plastic bags. It is illegal under State of Alaska regulations to keep caught fish alive on a stringer.



*The Gulkana is famous for its king and sockeye salmon.*

**Fishing for physically challenged anglers**  
 Sourdough Creek Campground, located 33 miles north of Glennallen includes fishing ramps, trails and other developments designed to provide accessible opportunities for fishing and hiking along the Gulkana National Wild River.

(right) *BLM funds and operates a variety of fisheries and habitat management projects with the State of Alaska and neighboring federal agency partners. For example, this counting tower is used to monitor returning salmon on the Gulkana River. You may encounter such a facility anywhere you are fishing, rafting or boating. Please do not touch or otherwise interfere with its operation. These facilities are used for research and monitoring and provide vital information that will help ensure that your fishing will always remain the quality experience that you expect.*

**Ice fishing**  
 Just because the lakes and rivers freeze doesn't mean you have to stop fishing. The best time for ice fishing is right after freezeup while the fish are still active. Once the ice builds to a safe thickness, anglers seek Dolly Varden, burbot, char, coho salmon, sheefish, whitefish and trout.

Before you take the whole family ice fishing, drill a test hole in the ice to check the thickness; 6 inches is a recommended minimum. Watch for overflows and be alert for rotting ice as the spring thaw progresses.

It is desirable to have an auger or ice chisel, an ice skimmer, a



Anglers need a current year's license in their possession. Other regulations apply.

(left) *Many lakes throughout Alaska provide opportunities for ice fishing.*  
 (below) *Rainbow trout*  
 (cover) *Fishing for arctic grayling is popular on many streams and lakes throughout Alaska. Photo by Adela Batin.*

**Angler's code of ethics**  
 Keep in mind that established fishing laws are designed to provide better fishing for everyone, now and in the future. But there is more to fishing than obeying the letter of the law. Your commitment to respect Alaska's aquatic resources is essential to preserve quality fishing opportunities for the future.

The ethical angler:

- supports conservation efforts
- properly recycles and disposes of trash
- practices safe angling and boating
- obeys fishing and boating regulations
- respects other anglers' rights
- respects property owners' rights
- shares fishing knowledge and skills
- doesn't release live bait into waters
- promotes ethical sport fishing
- supports conservation efforts by taking only the fish needed





# Common Freshwater Sportfish of Alaska

**arctic char** (*Salvelinus alpinus*)  
also known as alpine char, sea trout, arctic salmon

**physical description:** extremely variable color depending on size and habit; freshwater males have dark green backs with silver or blue sides; scattered red or orange spots (but some individuals completely lack spots)

**habitat/range:** inshore marine waters, lakes and rivers from Cook Inlet around western Alaska and on across the Bering and Arctic coasts to Newfoundland; has the most northerly distribution of any freshwater fish

**state record:** 27 pounds 6.5 ounces (2002)

**how to fish:** during summer the fish seek cool, deep water; troll deep with spoons or spinners

**other:** closely related to Dolly Varden and difficult to tell apart; can be anadromous or remain permanently in freshwater.

**burbot** (*Lota lota*)  
also known as ling cod, lush, eelpout, metling, kusk

**physical description:** a freshwater cod easily identified by a whisker-like barbel at the tip of the chin; also has a large mouth, small scales, and dorsal and anal fins that extend from mid-body to the tail; blotchy colors vary from olive/dark green to brownish green, to gray; most have some yellow blotches; mature fish range from 18 to 45 inches and 1 to 18 pounds in weight

**habitat/range:** more than 40 percent are caught in the Tanana River and its tributaries; can also be found in lakes throughout central Interior and northern Alaska

**state record:** 24 pounds 12 ounces (1976)

**how to fish:** set lines with No. 6/0 hook or larger; best fishing is in spring and fall.

**lake trout** (*Salvelinus namaycush*)  
also known as laker, mackinaw

**physical description:** deeply forked tail; typically greenish grey in color but can vary from silver to black

**habitat/range:** mountain lakes on the Kenai Peninsula; Tangle Lakes and other lakes along the Denali Highway; lakes in the Copper River drainage, Alaska Range and Brooks Range

**state record:** 47 pounds (1970)

**how to fish:** can be found at all depths but they prefer cold water (below 50 degrees F); they will more likely be found close to the bottom in summer; deep troll with spoons or redeyes. In winter, jig with spoons under the ice; can be caught with streamer flies with sinking-tip or full sinking line.

**other:** lake trout are susceptible to overfishing because they have low reproductive potential, grow slowly and are easily caught. Catch and release fishing is desirable for this species, particularly for the spawners which weigh 5 to 20 pounds.

**rainbow trout** (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)  
also known as rainbow

**physical description:** black spots on sides and back, and on dorsal and anal fins; reddish band along the side; smaller than the sea-run rainbows (called steelhead)

**habitat/range:** freshwater lakes and streams from south-eastern Alaska north to Bristol Bay

**state record:** 42 pounds 3 ounces (1970)

**how to fish:** rainbows prefer cold water, so fish for them near shore in spring and early summer (right after ice break-up), and again in the fall. Use spinners and spoons. When fly fishing, try a purple or olive lake leech. Remember to crimp your barbs for catch and release. In midsummer, the fish go to deep water; use spinners, spoons, and plugs.

**sockeye salmon** (*Oncorhynchus nerka*)  
also known as red, kokanee

**physical description:** lack of large spots on tail and back; generally smaller than chinook, coho or chums; mature adults average 6 to 8 pounds; spawners turn brilliant red with green heads and humped backs

**habitat/range:** very widespread in salt, fresh and marine waters. Can be found in Gulkana, Klutina, Sinuk and Pilgrim rivers, and lakes and streams in Southcentral and on the Seward Peninsula.

**state record:** 16 pounds (1974)

**how to fish:** generally are difficult to catch. They will take spinners in northern waters but prefer coho flies.

**other:** return to their home stream after spending one to four years in the ocean; kokanee are a landlocked freshwater variety; 10 to 20 million sockeye are caught in Bristol Bay each year.

**pink salmon** (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*)  
also known as pinks, humpies, humpback

**physical description:** smallest of the Pacific salmon in North America, averaging 3 to 5 pounds and 20 to 25 inches; silver sides and a bright steel blue on the top with many large black spots.

**habitat/range:** widespread throughout coastal waters

**state record:** 12 pounds 9 ounces (1974)

**how to fish:** during spawning season, relatively easy to catch at the mouths of streams with spoons or spinners.

**other:** develop to maturity in only two years

**sheefish** (*Stendous leucichthys*)  
also known as iconnu, tarpon of the north, shee

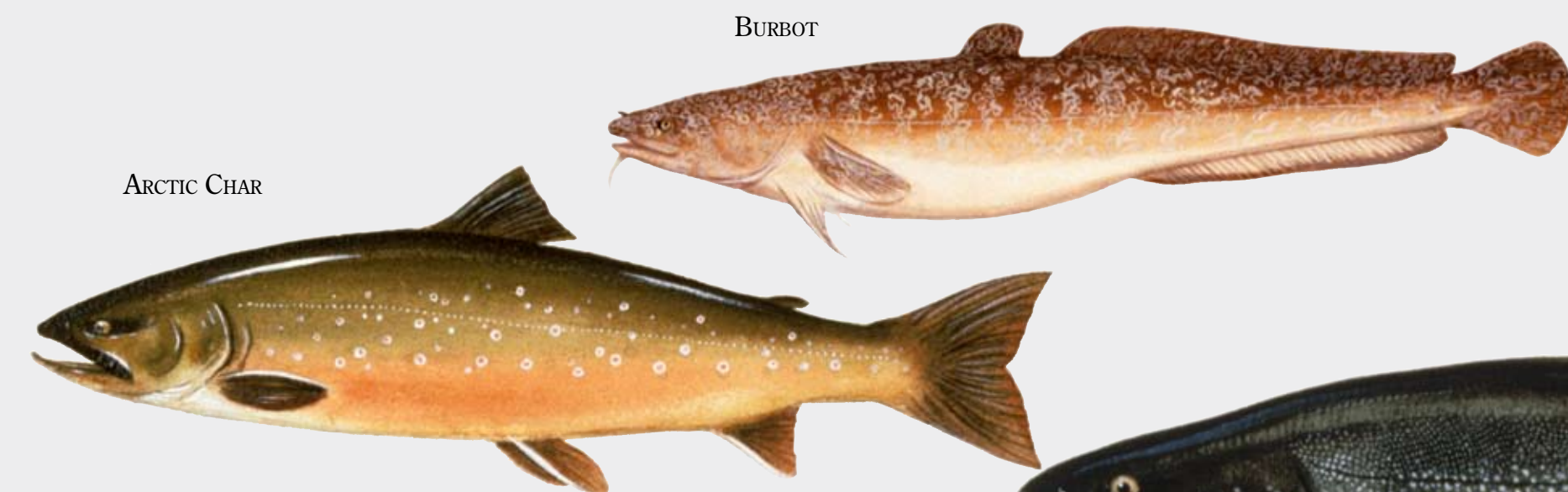
**physical description:** streamlined body, silver with darkening on the back; strong extended lower jaw

**habitat/range:** Kuskokwim, Selawik-Kobuk and Yukon River drainages

**state record:** 53 pounds (1986)

**how to fish:** use spoons or smelt; use 20 pound test line for casting and 75 pound test line if ice fishing.

**other:** largest whitefish and a unique trophy fish; unlike most Arctic species, these have rapid growth rates; a 50-pound spawning female can contain up to 40,000 eggs and will live to spawn again.



BURBOT



RAINBOW TROUT

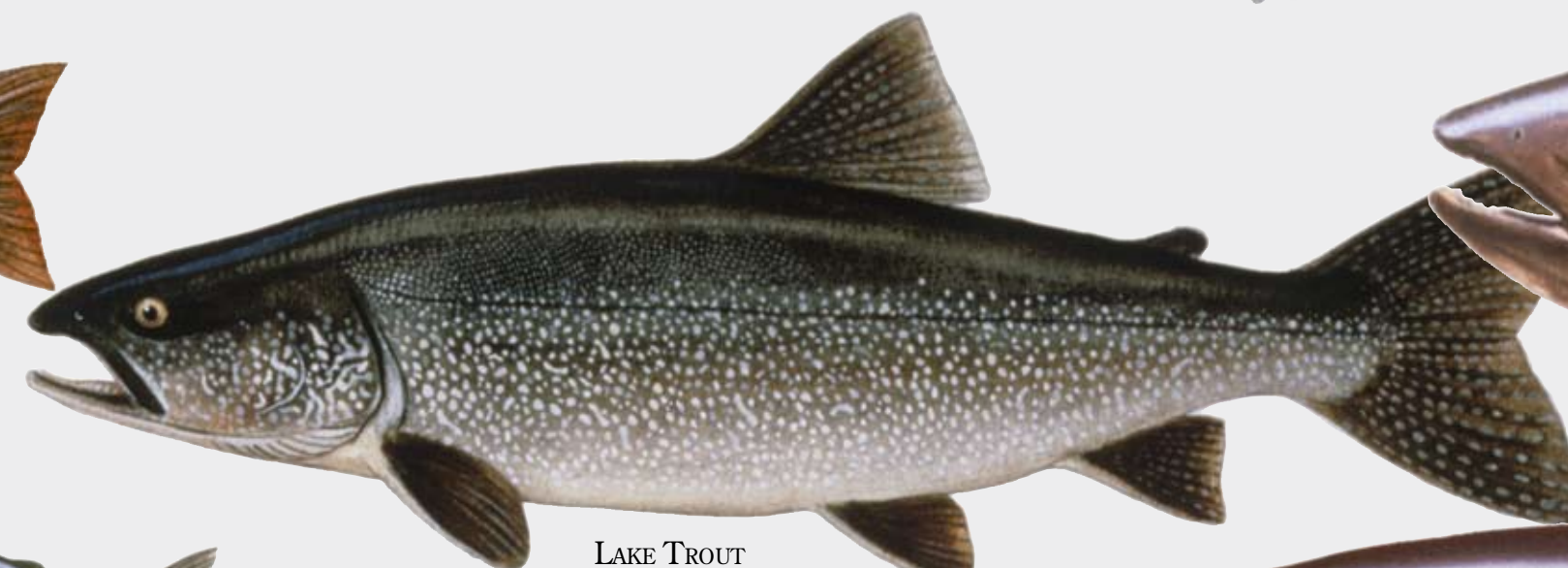


SOCKEYE SALMON  
female, spawning

PINK SALMON  
male, spawning



DOLLY VARDEN



LAKE TROUT



CHINOOK SALMON  
female, spawning



ARCTIC GRAYLING



COHO SALMON  
male, spawning



SHEEFISH



NORTHERN PIKE



STEELHEAD

**Dolly Varden** (*Salvelinus malma*)  
also known as Dollies, golden fin, sea trout, red spotted trout

**physical description:** generally mottled olive-brown color but the sea variety tends to be dark blue or green on the back with silver sides, both varieties have a red side stripe and red, orange or yellow spots on the back and sides; mature average weight 2 to 3 pounds (but anadromous varieties have reached up to 24 pounds)

**habitat/range:** lakes, rivers and coastal waters throughout Alaska

**state record:** 27 pounds 6 ounces (2002)

**how to fish:** salmon eggs, nymphs, wet flies and small bright lures; fish stream mouths and lake outlets April-June and August-September and saltwater May-July.

**other:** at one time there was a bounty on these fish as they are known to eat young salmon in streams; was once classified as a subspecies of Arctic char but is now considered a separate species.

**northern pike** (*Esox lucius*)  
also known as northerns, pike, jack fish, hammer handle

**physical description:** long, flattened jaw with many rows of sharp teeth; single dorsal towards tail

**habitat/range:** low-lying floodplains, lakes and wetlands of central, western, and northern Alaska; largest portion of harvest comes from Tanana River valley

**state record:** 38 pounds 8 ounces (1991)

**how to fish:** best fishing in June, July and in the fall; try wobbling spoons and plugs; some people use a steel leader to prevent the fish from cutting the line.

**other:** relatively long-lived (greater than 20 years); sometimes called a "water wolf" because of its aggressive predatory habits; has been known to kill and eat ducklings, muskrats, and mice.

**chinook salmon** (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)  
also known as king, spring, tyee and blackmouth

**physical description:** irregular black spotting on the back and dorsal fins; black pigment along the gum line; ocean: bluish green on back, silver to white on the sides and belly; spawning: red, copper or black; average mature weight is 16 to 40 pounds

**habitat/range:** abundant in rivers from southeastern Alaska to the Yukon River

**state record:** 97 pounds 4 ounces (1985)

**how to fish:** use spoons or spinners; due to heavy weights use 20 to 30 pound test line.

**other:** Yukon River spawners will travel more than 2,000 river miles in 60 days to reach headwaters in the Yukon Territory, using stored body fats for energy instead of eating along the way; possibly Alaska's most highly prized sport fish.

**coho salmon** (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)  
also known as silver

**physical description:** bright silver with black spots on the back and upper end of tail fin; gray gums; mature adults average 8 to 12 pounds and 24 to 30 inches long

**habitat/range:** coastal waters from southeast to Point Hope; also the entire length of the Yukon River

**state record:** 26 pounds (1976)

**how to fish:** use flies, spoons or spinners when fishing in streams.

**steelhead** (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)  
also known as steelies, kelt

**physical description:** generally the top of the head, back and upper sides are dark blue to green or brown; lower sides are silver, white or pale yellow; belly is white to gray. Note: steelheads get a reddish band once they return to freshwater, making it difficult to distinguish them from rainbow trout

**habitat/range:** Pacific Ocean coastal streams from south-east to Cold bay

**state record:** 42 pounds 3 ounces (1970)

**how to fish:** steelhead are often caught on their outer mouth parts and they can survive to spawn again, so it is important for you to file the barbs off your hooks.

**other:** steelhead are rainbow trout that have spent part of their lives at sea; will spawn more than once; check state regulations for current bag limits.

## Individual fish identification

This poster is a brief introduction to the most commonly-sought sport fish in Alaska. Material has been adapted from the *Game Fishes of Alaska* by Laurie Weidlich, the *Alaska Wildlife Notebook* series, and other publications of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Sport Fish.

Illustrations courtesy of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, used with permission. Coloration of fish will vary with sex and season.

U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

