



White Perch

Morone americana (Gmelin, 1789)
syn. *Perca americana*, *Morone americanus*, *Morone pallida*, *Morone rufa*, *Roccus americanus*, *Perca immaculata*

ALBERTA REGULATION:
FISHERIES ACT

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Overview:

White perch are a ray-finned fish of the temperate bass family. Their native range is the Atlantic drainages from the St. Lawrence to Lake Ontario drainage and down to South Carolina.¹ White perch were brought to Nebraska from New Jersey in 1964 and hatchery fry escaped into the Missouri River. They have been intentionally stocked in some areas for sportfishing.² It is currently established in all five Great Lakes, likely through the canals.²

White perch are highly reproductive, aggressively compete with other fish for space and resources, and feed heavily upon the eggs of other fish. Three years after being introduced to a Nebraska reservoir, white perch had almost completely replaced the previously dominant black bullhead.²

White perch can hybridize with native

white bass; these hybrids have been found in the Great Lakes. Hybrids can backcross with the parental species, diluting of the gene pool of both species.²

As of January 1, 2016, the possession, sale, or transport of this species in Alberta is illegal under the Fisheries Act.

Habitat:

White perch can inhabit fresh, brackish, and saltwater. Commonly, they are found close to shore along coastlines, pools and quiet water areas or medium to large rivers, usually over mud. White perch can also inhabit freshwater lakes and ponds with no connection to sea water.¹

Identification:

White perch have a deep and laterally compressed body; it is the deepest just ahead of the front dorsal fin.¹ Body colour varies from dark grey, silvery green to almost black on the back, pale-olive or silvery-green on the sides, and silvery-white on the belly. The head is depressed and the nose is pointed. The mouth is terminal with small pointed teeth and a narrow tooth patch on the front and sides of the tongue for grasping prey. There are no barbels.¹

There are two dorsal fins partially connected by a membrane; if the front dorsal fin becomes erect, the soft dorsal fin will follow.¹ The first dorsal fin has 6-10 spines and the second has 1 spine and 10-13 soft rays. Also, the anal fin has 1 spine and 8-10 soft rays. The lateral line has 44-52 scales with toothed edges - ctenoid scales.



White Perch *(continued)*

Juveniles are similar looking to adults, but the lateral line may be faint.¹ Typical length is 12.7-17.8 cm with a weight of 250-650 g. The maximum recorded age is 16 years¹ with an average of around 10 years.³

Ecology:

White perch migrate from salt water into tidal freshwater portions of streams and rivers in their native environment in order to spawn in the spring. In inland waters, it moves from deep to shallow water to spawn when water temperatures are 15-20°C.¹ The spawning period lasts 10-21 days; individual females expel eggs multiple times in a season and between 50,000 to 150,000 eggs in total, per season. The eggs sink to the bottom and stick.¹ Multiple males may hang around a female to fertilize her eggs.³

Hatching occurs in 1-6 days, the average 4 days. Larval white perch feed on insect larvae and zooplankton for the first year.³ As they grow they begin to consume aquatic invertebrates¹ and other fish, especially

minnows.³ Fish eggs and larvae of other species, primarily walleye and white bass, comprise a large part of the adult diet. White perch are even known to cannibalize their own eggs.³

Economic Impacts:

White perch consumption of insect larvae and zooplankton competes directly with native fish for food.³ The collapse of some commercial fisheries has been coincident with increases in white perch populations as they aggressively prey on fish eggs and larvae of other species.³ The decline of native sportfish populations, such as walleye and white bass, could have impacts on recreation and tourism.

Environmental Impacts:

White perch consumption of insect larvae and zooplankton competes directly with native fish for food. The high percentage of fish eggs in the white perch diet disrupts the structure and trophic relationships in aquatic communities causing a decline in some native fish populations, which

has grave impacts for top predator populations. Hybridization with native bass leads to diluted gene pools.¹

Sociological Impacts:

The transformation of native aquatic communities results in the intrinsic loss of natural capital and enjoyment of natural areas.

Prevention:

Learn how to identify white perch and how to prevent spread. Accidental and intentional releases are responsible for white perch introduction and spread. Never empty your aquarium into natural water bodies.

Control:

Currently, there are no established control options for white perch other than preventing introduction and harvesting by fishing.¹ If caught, white perch should be killed and not released. It is a highly regarded panfish for eating in the eastern U.S.³



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White Perch *(continued)*

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3. Global Invasive Species Database (GISD) 2015. Species profile *Morone americana*. Available from: <http://www.iucngisd.org/gisd/species.php?sc=989> Accessed: October 28, 2016.