

## Moosehead Lake Region Fishing Report



Moosehead Lake Region Fishing Report – 6/14/24

### The fresh smell of cucumbers, Maine’s ‘Cucumber Fish’!

Like smelt, lake whitefish have the fresh smell of cucumbers. Yes, cucumbers!

When sampling for both fish species we can usually smell them before we have seen or picked them from our nets. If the Greenville office smells like fresh cucumbers, this means the fisheries biologists have obtained a sample of one of these two species and are processing a sample in the fish lab.

Many anglers have experienced this smell of spring when handling smelt due to their popularity as a baitfish species, along with their very popular dipnet and hand-line fishing opportunities in Maine. However, lake whitefish are only found in a limited number of waters that maintain suitable populations to support recreational fisheries and are not encountered by many Maine anglers. In the Moosehead Lake Region, these waters are isolated to the Allagash River drainage in northern Maine, with most of them being caught during the winter ice fishing season. The waters that support this limited opportunity are Allagash Lake, Chamberlain Lake, Telos Lake, and Round Pond in the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. The regulation for whitefish on these waters is a three fish daily bag limit with a minimum length of 16 inches. During our creel census surveys on Chamberlain Lake, Telos Lake, and Round Pond in the winter of 2023 we saw 32 harvested lake whitefish that had an average length of 16.8 inches and an average weight of 1.5 pounds.



Angler lake whitefish harvest from Chamberlain Lake.

Lake whitefish are technically a salmonid, related to the salmon/trout family. Like landlocked salmon, landlocked arctic charr, lake trout, brook trout, brown trout, and rainbow trout they have a distinctive small posterior dorsal adipose (fleshy) fin located on the back between the dorsal and caudal (tail) fins, a characteristic of the family. Their overall coloration is silvery, with silvery sides, a dark colored back and a white belly. They have a snout that overhangs their lower jaw, a deeply forked tail, dark colored fins, and large scales. They are also one of Maine’s long-lived sportfish species, many living 10 or

more years, with the capability living more than 30+ years.

Over the past year IF&W has created a lake whitefish working group comprised of one biologist from each of our seven fisheries regions, our Native Fish Conservation Biologist, and the Fisheries Planner/Research Coordinator to re-evaluate the status of lake whitefish populations in Maine. Much of the work done thus far has been to create new guidelines and considerations for acquiring the necessary information to track population trends and to improve the monitoring of these important fisheries.

One of the strategies to increase our knowledge and address our data needs on lake whitefish populations is to get more angler involvement in passive surveillance. One of the ways this can be achieved is to bolster our voluntary record keeping by anglers on these lake whitefish waters. Increasing angler participation of providing annual catch data will help biologists better understand the population trajectory and address information gaps on these fisheries, while also generating a list of anglers fishing for lake whitefish on these waters that may also be of assistance on future passive surveillance projects.

If you are interested in making a positive contribution to enhance, preserve and protect lake whitefish populations for the future we encourage anglers to sign up to become a citizen scientist and join the Moosehead Lake Region Fishing Record Book Program. We would also encourage anglers fishing any of the waters in the Moosehead Lake Region to sign up for this program. To sign up you can contact me by e-mail [Stephen.Seeback@maine.gov](mailto:Stephen.Seeback@maine.gov) ,or by mail P. O. Box 551, Greenville, Maine 04441, or by phone (207) 695-4138.

Submitted by Stephen Seeback, Fisheries Resource Technician, Moosehead Lake Region