

Walleye vs. Pickerel

The Walleye (*Sander vitreum*) is the largest North American species in the perch family and one of the most sought-after sport and food fishes. As in all members of the perch family, walleye have two distinct dorsal fins with the first being spiny-rayed and the second soft-rayed. They are distributed across Saskatchewan.

Walleye



Some residents of Saskatchewan refer to the walleye as pickerel (sometimes yellow pickerel). It is a common name for the species as jack is for northern pike. In Saskatchewan we try to discourage the use of pickerel when referring to walleye because of the following two species:

The Chain Pickerel (*Esox niger*) that is an especially popular sport fish in the winter when large numbers are caught through the ice. The chain pickerel is a member of the pike family and has the long snout with concave profile and sides with chain like markings. Though it looks like the northern pike, the pickerel has only 4 pores on the underside of the jaw, while the pike has 5. In Canada the chain pickerel can be found in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Quebec.

Chain Pickerel



The Redfin Pickerel (*Esox americanus*) that is the smallest member of the pike family and the only one not considered an important sport fish. Its long head has a short snout with sides that have greenish-yellow to brown wavy bars. Unlike the chain pickerel, the dark bar under its eye slopes down and back. In Canada it is found in the St Lawrence River, and south west through the Great Lakes (Erie and Ontario).

Redfin Pickerel



Though both of these pickerel species are not found within Saskatchewan, the government makes every attempt to refer to the walleye only as walleye. We recognize that since fishing is passed down from generation to generation, whatever name, walleye or pickerel, the person who taught you to fish will use the common name when referring to the species. However, we utilize the common name walleye to avoid confusion within the pickerel species.