

Atlantic Whitefish

Coregonus huntsmani

STATUS

Endangered 

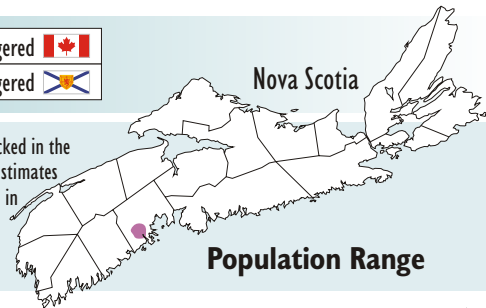
Endangered 

39

Nova Scotia

Native population land-locked in the Petite Rivière watershed. Estimates suggest less than 1000 left in the wild. Believed to be extirpated from the Tusknet River, Yarmouth County.

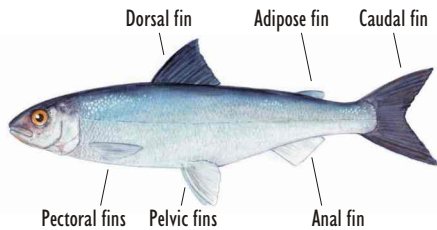
Population Range



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Species Description

The Atlantic Whitefish is a salmonid with an elongated body, a fleshy adipose fin, and a deeply forked caudal fin (tail). It has a dark green to dark blue back, slightly lighter sides and a silvery white belly. It has dusky dorsal and caudal fins and light pelvic and anal fins. Landlocked, it is 20-25 cm long.



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- Terminal mouth (faces forward at end of snout)
- More than 90 large lateral line scales
- Upper and lower jaws fairly equal in length
- No spots or upper body markings

Habitat

They are typically anadromous (sea run) fish, which spawn in freshwater then return to the ocean. However, in the Petite Rivière, Atlantic Whitefish occur in three connected lakes above Hebb Dam. Therefore, they are landlocked and unable to return to the ocean. They are found in the deeper cool waters in these lakes.



Atlantic Whitefish occur in Hebb, Millipsigate and Minamkeak Lakes. You can see them in captivity at the Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic in Lunenburg or at the Mersey Biodiversity Facility in Milton.

Interesting Points

- The most primitive of all North American Whitefishes (oldest evolutionary link).
- **Found nowhere else in the world!**
- Also known as the Acadian, Sault or Round Whitefish.
- According to old stories, Tuskert River Atlantic Whitefish were so plentiful they were taken by the truckload and used as fertilizer or lobster bait.



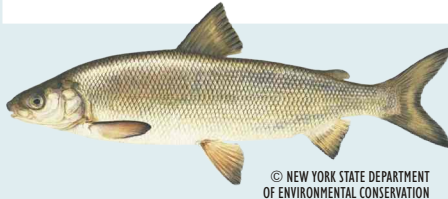
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Atlantic Whitefish:
Terminal mouth (faces forward) and more than 90 lateral scales.



Similar Species

Lake Whitefish:
Common, fewer than 90 lateral scales (on side from head to tail); subterminal mouth (faces downwards).



Threats to Survival

- Hydroelectric dam construction prevents passage to the sea.
- Habitat acidification from acid rain and pollution.
- Competition from introduced species (smallmouth bass, chain pickerel).
- Poor land use practices (agricultural, forestry and residential).
- Poaching and recreational fishing.



Chain pickerel

How You Can Help

Prevent the introduction of invasive species - it is illegal to move fish from one body of water to another. Fishing Atlantic Whitefish is prohibited-learn to distinguish the two whitefish species. Protect fish habitat on your land by leaving a buffer of trees along the waters edge.



Atlantic Whitefish release

Contacts, Information, Sighting Reports & Stewardship Opportunities

Contact: DFO Species at Risk 1-866-891-0771 and NS Department of Agriculture and Fisheries inlandfish@gov.ns.ca

Info: www.sararegistry.gc.ca, www.speciesatrisk.gc.ca,

Sighting Reports: 1-866-727-3447 or sightings@speciesatrisk.ca

Stewardship: Bluenose Coastal Action Foundation (902) 624-9888 www.coastalaction.org