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“CATCH THE COUSIN” VIRTUAL NORTHERN PIKE ICE FISHING CONTEST

A Conservation Project hosted by the North Metro Chapter of Muskie’s Inc.



Photo Credit 1Ted Mitshulis

January 9 – February 28, 2021
(Every Saturday & Sunday ONLY)

Welcome to the 2021 First Annual “Catch the Cousin” conservation contest, brought to you by the North Metro Chapter of Muskie’s Inc. (Chapter 21)! To keep the party going all year long, we are hosting this contest to highlight a muskie relative – the Northern Pike – and also to emphasize the importance of fisheries conservation. Let’s get it on!

RULES

Even though these relatives look similar and are of the toothy *Esox* variety, catching Minnesota's Northern Pikes during the ice fishing season is a whole new ball game. In addition, it is just as important to help preserve and protect our fisheries in the winter as it is during open water season. This is an "on your honor" tournament, so please report your fishing results accurately. We encourage all participants to follow all COVID-19 safety protocols, but we hope you can make this a family affair! Bring your kids, dogs, and grills and enjoy some fresh air out on the ice.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

This virtual tournament is 100% FREE to all NMMI members, including youth participants. You've got nothing to lose and every reason to join!

WHEN AND WHERE CAN I FISH?

This contest will be a weekend-only tournament (Saturdays and Sundays ONLY) from January 9 – February 28, 2021. All fish must be reported by 11:59 PM on February 28, 2021. You can fish in any lake, river, pond, or stream in Minnesota or Wisconsin. However, if you plan to harvest fish for the Hammer Handle Harvest Bonus (see below), we hope that you'll choose a Minnesota muskie lake.

HOW DO I GET POINTS?

While this contest is all about finding ways to catch Northern Pike, there is also an equal emphasis on finding ways to preserve and protect our beautiful Minnesota fisheries. If you are spearing, we highly encourage you NOT to spear any trophy pike. **Please take a photo of your fish and/or harvest and/or ice clean-up and submit photos.**

Category	Points	
Northern Pike	25" – 29"	3 Points
	30" – 34"	5 Points
	35" – 39"	10 Points
	40"+	15 Points
Hammer-Handle Harvest Bonus <small>*ONLY North-Central Pike Zone</small>	2 Points per fish	
Ice Clean-Up Conservation Bonus	1 Point	

Hammer-Handle Limit Harvest Bonus

The Minnesota DNR recently rolled out the state's [Northern Pike Zones](#), and the largest North Central Zone is plagued with too many small pike. This overabundance of small pike is problematic, so we are giving bonus points to anyone who catches and harvests hammer-handle pike in this zone (fish eligible for harvest bonus must be under 22"). Please make sure to take pictures of your harvest to get the points! In addition, please feel free to share how you like to cook and eat your delicious little hammer-handles. [[How to Fillet Northern Pike](#)]



Photo Credit 2 MN DNR

Ice Clean-Up Conservation Bonus

We all know that there are irresponsible anglers who leave plenty of trash behind on the ice. However, if you stop to grab some of this trash and do your part to conserve our beautiful lakes, you will be awarded bonus points. Please make sure to take pictures of your haul to get the points!

- *Extra Credit: If you want to get really creative with your conservation efforts, consider magnet fishing and see what you can pull up.



Photo Credit 3 MN DNR

REPORTING YOUR POINTS

To record your points and get on the board, please report your photos and measurements to NMMI Board Member Nikki Bentley and feel free to share your photos on the [Facebook NMMI League Night](#) page. [Text: 701-261-2894/Email: thenikkibentley@gmail.com] Weekly results will be tabulated and shared via social media and our NMMI membership newsletters.

PRIZES

Prize packages will be awarded for the following categories and include such items as iFishPros, lures, tackle, NMMI merchandise, and much more!

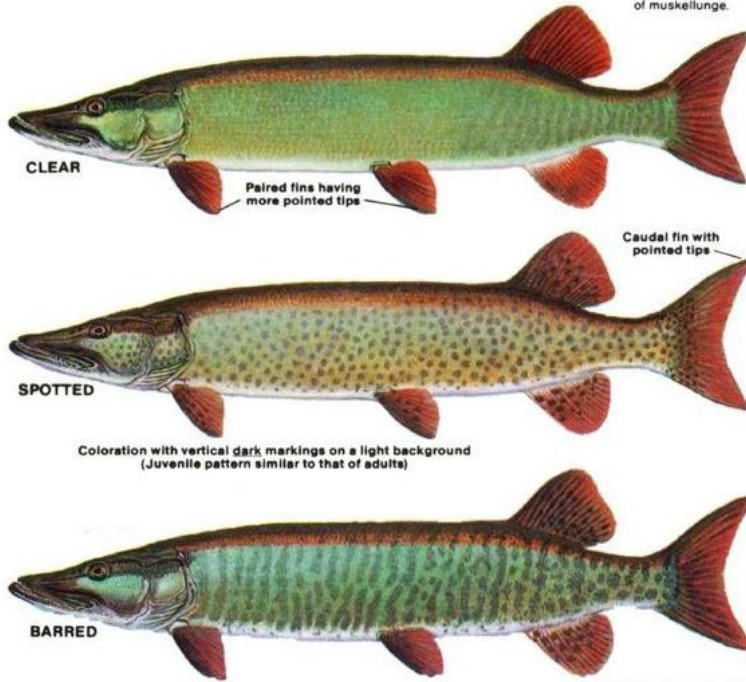
- First Place
- Second Place
- Third Place
- Hammer-Handle Champ
- Ice Clean-Up Champ

Difference Between Muskie, Tiger Musky & Northern Pike

MUSKELLUNGE
(*Esox masquinongy*)

**3 COMMON PATTERN
VARIATIONS**

NOTE: Faint indication of marking pattern is sometimes present on posterior 1/3 of body in "clear" variation of muskellunge.



CLEAR

Paired fins having more pointed tips

Caudal fin with pointed tips

SPOTTED

Coloration with vertical dark markings on a light background (Juvenile pattern similar to that of adults)

BARRED

NOTE: Background colors of fish can vary slightly depending on environmental characteristics of the water body and its geographic location. One marking pattern may dominate in an area, but all 3 can be present.

HYBRID "TIGER" MUSKELLUNGE
(*Esox masquinongy* X *Esox lucius*)

Coloration having irregular narrow vertical dark markings on a light background with stripes merging onto the back in an interlocking pattern



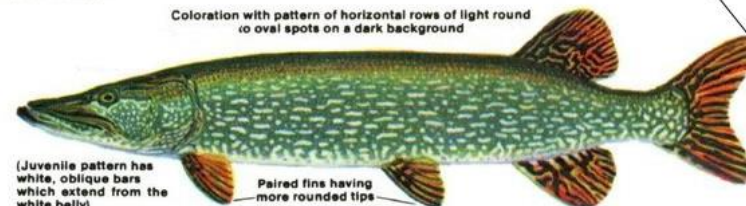
Caudal fin with rounded tips

Paired fins having rounded tips

NOTE: Sides sometimes exhibit an alternating pattern of stripes and spots, or narrow paired-bars on a light background. Pattern never resembles that of northern pike.

NORTHERN PIKE
(*Esox lucius*)

Coloration with pattern of horizontal rows of light round (or oval) spots on a dark background



Caudal fin with more rounded tips

Paired fins having more rounded tips

(Juvenile pattern has white, oblique bars which extend from the white belly)

NOTE: Some areas may contain "Silver Pike" which is a mutant color variation of northern pike that lack the characteristic spots and have dark to light greyish/blue sides. Fin coloration normal for northern pike is exhibited in the "silver" variety.

Color illustrations by:
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