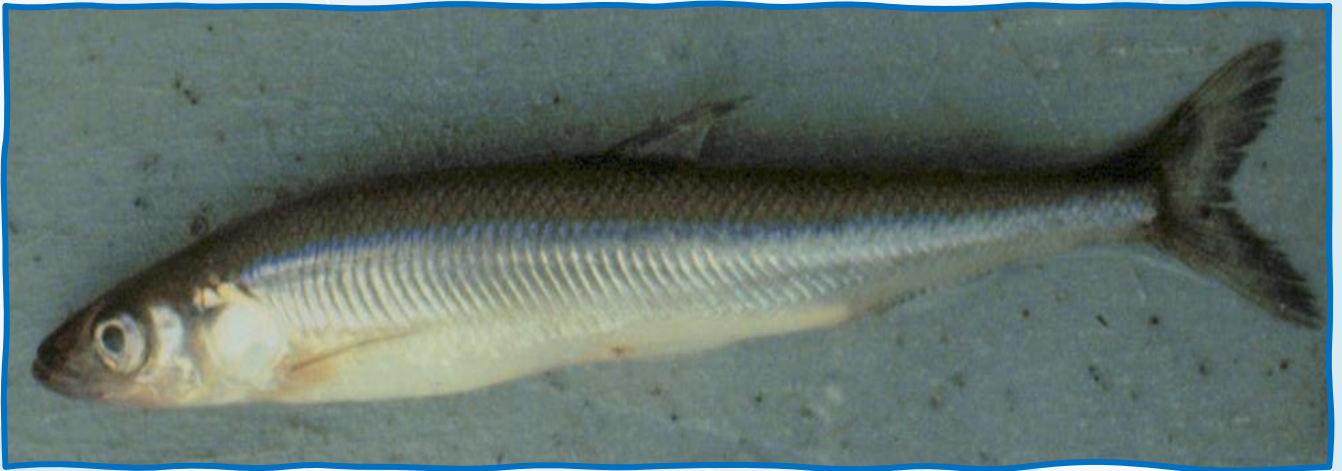


Rainbow Smelt

Osmerus mordax



What is it and Why is it a Problem?

Rainbow Smelt is a predatory fish that invades lakes and moves into streams, rivers and shorelands to spawn. This fish is a threat to native biodiversity because it eats native juvenile fish, as well as tiny plankton which is a food source for fish and other aquatic organisms. This invasive species is known for disrupting food webs as well as reducing zooplankton and native fish populations, including Yellow Perch, Walleye, Lake Herring, Whitefish, and Lake Trout.



What Does it Look Like?

- Adults have long, skinny bodies, are around 19 cm long and have olive-green backs, silver bellies, and iridescent purple-pink or blue sides
- Mouth is large with a protruding lower jaw and has large canine teeth on the roof
- Single dorsal fin located in the middle of the back and a small adipose fin (fin located in between dorsal and tail)
- Scales are small and easily fall off during handling
- Look similar to native minnows (*Cyprinidae* sp.), Lake Whitefish, and Cisco, but minnows do not have an adipose fin or large teeth and Lake Whitefish and Cisco do not have teeth on the roof of the mouth.



How Can it be Managed?

- Report sightings of any invasive species online through [EDDMapS Ontario](#), a web-based mapping system which also has an app, or through the [Invasive Species in](#)

[Ontario](#) project on [iNaturalist.org](#).

- Learn how to identify it so you can avoid accidentally spreading it with your fishing gear and equipment. Inspect your boat, trailer and fishing gear before leaving a fishing spot and before heading to a new one to remove any mud, plant fragments and animals. Dispose of any plant and animal matter in the garbage. Refer to the [OMNRF's Boater's Action Plan](#) for more information on cleaning your boat and gear.
- Release water from your motor, live well, bilge and transom wells once on land.
- If you happen to catch a Rainbow Smelt, you must destroy it to prevent further growth and reproduction - do not put it back into the water. Also, never use live Rainbow Smelt as bait - it is illegal to do so. However, you may use *dead* Rainbow Smelt as bait, except in Fisheries Management Zones 2, 4, 5, and 6.
- Do not release live bait into the water body - it is illegal to release live baitfish. They may also carry invasive species in their containers from other water bodies that you cannot see. Instead, you can freeze or salt your live bait to save for another use. If you are not going to use it again, you can throw it in the garbage.
- Do not release/dispose of aquarium or pond contents into water bodies as they often carry invasive species.

References

[Great Lakes Nonindigenous Species Information System](#), produced by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[Ontario Invading Species Awareness Program](#), developed by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF), and the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters (OFAH).



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