

Rainbow smelt

Osmerus mordax

Description

Introduced into Crystal Lake, Michigan, as prey species in 1912; escaped and invaded Great Lakes. Spread by the use and release of live bait; illegal stocking.

Identification

Up to 12 inches; shimmers colorfully in water but out of water fades quickly and smells like cucumbers; has an adipose fin; large teeth on jaws and tongue; large mouth, protruding lower jaw, upper jaw extends to middle of eye or beyond.

Habitat

Native to the Atlantic Coast and Lake Champlain. Found landlocked in clear, cool, deep lakes; spawns in early spring along shorelines, rivers,



streams; often schools in open water in summer.

Reproduction

Impact

Capable of decimating walleye populations. They eat the young of lake trout, cisco, whitefish, walleye and even their own. Implicated in the decline of native Great Lakes fish due to predation and early life mortality syndrome

Similar

Monitoring and Rapid Response

Clean, drain, dry.

Credits

The information provided in this factsheet was gathered from "Invaders of the Great Lakes" produced by Wildlife Forever, the Sea Grant Great Lakes Network and the Ohio DNR. Individual species images that appear with a number in a black box are courtesy of the Bugwood.org network (<http://www.invasive.org>). Individual photo author credits may not be included due to the small display size of the images and subsequent difficulty of reading the provided text. All other images appear courtesy of Google (<http://images.google.com>).