

Fishing on Yukon time

A Guide to Fishing in Yukon



Yukon fish and how to catch them

LAKETROUT

A beautiful fish. We manage this one carefully because it is popular with anglers and reproduces very slowly in cold northern waters. Look for lake trout in nearly all Yukon lakes.

Lake trout spend time feeding in shallow water during the two to three week period after ice out, which can occur

anytime from early May to early June. During this period you can try large silver spoons and spinners, shallow-diving plugs, and even large streamers and minnow patterns on a fly rod.

When the lakes stratify in early July and the trout go deep, it's time to switch to jigs and heavy jigging spoons. When jigging for lake trout, bring your rod tip up sharply and then let the lure settle, paying careful attention to your line as the lure falls; trout often take the lure as it flutters

downward through the water. Another method for catching lake trout in deep water is trolling with weights or a downrigger setup. Yukon anglers usually

release big lake trout because they're more valuable as spawners than as wall mounts.



ARCTIC GRAYLING

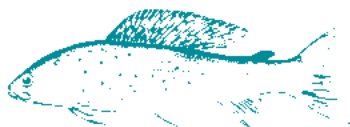
This classic Yukon fish has a colourful and oversized dorsal

fin. Found in almost every lake and stream, grayling average about 0.5 kg (1 lb). Look for them in pools, eddies, and below riffles in creeks and rivers. In lakes, look for them at the outlet or

near the mouths of streams entering the lake. Small spinners and spoons are commonly used to catch this fish. Grayling are a great fish to take on ultra light gear or with a fly rod. This is also

a great fish for kids and those just learning how to fish. On small creeks you can tie a fly on light spin-casting gear, and fish it below a bobber. On large rivers you can drift fish for grayling by

bouncing tiny jigs near the bottom.



NORTHERN PIKE

A large fish that's capable of incredible bursts of speed to catch its prey, northern pike are a popular

choice among Yukon anglers. Mature female pike can weigh more than 10 kg (22 lbs). Pike are easy

to catch, exciting on the line and make a great

meal when taken in cold northern waters. You'll find pike in small, shallow lakes, shallow bays in large lakes and in the sloughs and backwaters of large rivers. Pike are commonly fished with

medium to large spoons and spinners. Many local anglers are now fishing pike with surface flies,

plugs and other top water lures, which bring the pike out of the water as they take the bait. Try

casting around the edges of weed beds, where pike hide to ambush their prey. Be sure to bring

pliers with you to use when removing your hook; these fish have sharp teeth!



WHITEFISH

Whitefish are one of the most common fish

in the north. There are two types of white-

fish of interest to Yukon anglers: broad whitefish and lake whitefish,

sometimes known as humpies. Average weight is about 1 kg (2 lbs)

for both types, but fish in the range of 1.5-3 kg (3.5-7 lbs) are not

uncommon. Whitefish have always been an important part of Yukon First Nation diet and anglers

appreciate its fine flavour and surprising excitement on the line. Watch for fins breaking the

water as whitefish patrol shallow mud and sand flats throughout the summer. In streams, fish at

the mouths of tributaries and below rapids. Small spoons and spinners, light jigs (1/32 or 1/64 oz)

and beadhead flies all work well. This fish has a soft mouth so set your hook gently.



Fishing on

DOLLY VARDEN

This colourful fish is found in two areas of the Yukon: the Tatshenshini River drainage in the southwest and the Peel River drainage in the far north. Dempster Highway travellers can fish in the Blackstone River, and Haines Road travellers can fish in the Tatshenshini River and its tributaries.

Good fishing begins in early June and runs through to late October. At this time of year in the Tatshenshini River drainage they are feeding on salmon eggs, so imitation salmon roe is the bait to use. A pixie spoon with its bright orange centre is another good choice. Dollies can reach up to 1.5 kg (3 lbs).



BULL TROUT

Bull trout are very similar in appearance to Dolly Varden. Distinguishing features are a larger, more flattened head than dollies, and their distribution in Yukon does not overlap. An aggressive fish, the bull trout is found in the Liard River drainage in the southeast Yukon, in lakes as well as rivers. In rivers, look for it above and below rapids, in deep pools, and at the mouths of tributary streams. In lakes, look near inlets, outlets and narrow spots. Bull trout will take medium spinners and spoons as well as flies. Shallow trolling near the shore works well in lakes. Bull trout average about 1 kg (2 lbs).



RAINBOW TROUT

A very popular game fish all over North America, wild populations of rainbow trout in Yukon are found in the Kathleen and Aishihik river systems in the Haines Junction area. In McIntyre Creek and McLean Lakes near Whitehorse, rainbows stocked in the 1950s are now naturally reproducing populations. Rainbow trout are also stocked in small pothole lakes near many Yukon communities. Small spinners are effective for rainbows and so are traditional trout flies. Flies imitating leeches are a good bet as well. In stocked lakes, power bait is very popular with local anglers. In spring, cast your lure onto the ice then drag it off into the water – trout cruising along the ice edge may take the lure as it falls. Shallow trolling behind a canoe or belly boat can also be effective. Fishing from shore works just as well in many of the stocked lakes.



BURBOT

The only freshwater member of the cod family, burbot are found in most lakes and large rivers in Yukon, and can weigh more than 8 kg (18 lbs), but are more commonly 1 to 3 kg (2 to 7 lbs). With their white, flaky meat, burbot are a popular choice for winter anglers, who catch them through the ice with bait, jigs or by jigging spoons. Try fishing near creek inflows, flats with mud or weed bottoms, and in large, slow river eddies. Burbot can be caught in

summer as well, but are less often encountered. It's a little difficult to skin this unusual fish with a knife. After killing it quickly and humanely, you can pull the skin off with a pair of pliers. Boil the meat in salted water, or fry it in garlic butter for a taste comparable to lobster.



Yukon time

INCONNU

Inconnu means “unknown” in French, an appropriate name for this large member of the whitefish family. Not much is known about their life history in Yukon waters. Inconnu have a white, oily flesh, which some people dislike but others find delicious. Inconnu are scrappy fighters on the end of a line, and grow to weights of 10 kg (22 lbs). Unlike other whitefish, inconnu have a large, forward-pointed mouth, and feed mainly on fish. Inconnu are found in the Yukon and Peel River drainages, and anglers pursuing them usually fish in large rivers and at the mouths of tributary streams and in back eddies. Inconnu are sometimes fished with gold and silver spoons about 4 cm (1 1/2 in) long. Others drift fish with rubber tailed jigs. Inconnu are easier to find when the rivers are low in August or September. If you plan to release this fish, handle it very gently as its scales come off easily.



SALMON

Four types of salmon enter the Tatshenshini and Yukon River systems from mid-summer to early fall: Chinook, Coho, Sockeye and Chum. Salmon fishing requires special gear including a heavy rod and reel. This fishery has detailed seasonal closures, and short-notice closures can occur anytime if the runs are lower than expected. For more information about salmon, contact Fisheries and Oceans, Canada (DFO) in Whitehorse at (867) 393-6722 or 1-866-676-6722.



Acknowledgements

Much of the information about how to catch fish was graciously provided by Glenn Babala, Chuck Gregersen and Clayton White.





PHOTO: YUKON GOVERNMENT

The nature and culture of Yukon fishing

Welcome to fishing in Yukon. If you're a long-time resident, your personal relationship with nature is one reason why Yukon has one of the highest rates of resident anglers in Canada. If you're a first-time visitor or a new resident, you're about to enjoy fishing unlike anything you've experienced before.

Because in Yukon, fishing isn't just about fish. It's also about the eagle floating overhead, the moose feeding on the opposite shore and the wolf watching at a distance. It's about a world-class wilderness experience that can reaffirm your ancestral relationship with nature. And in Yukon, wild nature is easy to reach.

Our network of highways and campgrounds will let you enjoy good fishing and pristine wilderness near the comfort and safety of your vehicle. Our fishing regulations are simple and our guides are ready to share their local knowledge and passion for this land.

To get the most out of your fishing experience, you need to know one more thing

about Yukon. We have a novel approach to live release fishing that grew out of a meeting of cultures, and we are proud to share it with you. We are leaders in blending the best southern conservation methods with the best First Nation traditions, creating a unique philosophy of nature.

So grab your fishing pole, and prepare for a great Yukon fishing experience.

“Recreational fishing is a spiritual quest. People are trying to fulfill their spiritual needs and that’s good. But the value is in getting out there in nature’s creation. It’s not in the fish.”

— Mark Wedge, Carcross-Tagish First Nation

PLEASE PRACTISE NO-TRACE FISHING

- Burn or pack out all garbage, including toilet paper. Fishing line should be properly recycled or discarded.
- If you have a fire, build it in an existing fire pit or on a 20 cm (8 in.) base of sand or gravel.
- When finished, soak the campfire, pick out unburned items and scatter the ashes.
- Make a final sweep for garbage before leaving camp.
- Clean your fish at the shoreline. Put guts in the water; fast-moving water if possible. Pop the air bladder so the guts will sink.
- Carry binoculars to watch wildlife at a distance without disturbing it.

Live release – the Yukon way

Yukon's unique approach to live release fishing has been influenced by First Nation traditions of respect for all living things. If live release is practised without restraint, at some point it ceases to be a conservation tool and becomes harassment. That's why we promote live release mainly as a management tool to help us select the fish we are going to keep and eat.

Here's how it works. Large females carry thousands of eggs and are the most important spawners. In the tradition of some Yukon First Nations, these are the fish mothers that keep the lakes full of fish. And these are the fish you should release to help maintain fish stocks for the future. You can make a healthy fresh meal out of smaller fish, which are more numerous and more quickly replaced in nature.

HOW TO RELEASE FISH UNHARMED

1. Use barbless hooks.
2. Carry a pair of long-nose pliers.
3. Keeping the fish in the water, grab the hook with your pliers and give it a twist.
4. If it's hooked deep in the gullet, cut the line.
5. If you need a picture, wet your hands before holding the fish horizontally with one hand behind the gill cover and the other under the belly, or near the tail.
6. Don't lift it up with your fingers under the gill cover, and don't squeeze the belly.
7. Release the fish gently into the water. Never throw it.

LIVE RELEASE ETHICS

1. Treat the fish gently, with respect.
2. Learn the proper handling techniques.
3. Practise live release in moderation.
4. Keep any legal fish that is bleeding or injured.
5. Stop fishing when you reach your catch limit.
6. Don't practise live release in schools of spawning fish.
7. Don't practise live release in hot weather or warm water.
8. If you are not going to keep a fish, release it right away.

Fish and First Nations

Fish have always been an important part of the wild food basket of Yukon First Nation people. In old times, small groups of people spent the winter camped beside good fishing lakes where nets were set under the ice. Fresh fish supplemented the cache of dry meat and berries and helped families get through the winter. People may live in town today, but the cultural connections to fish are as strong as ever. Many First Nation citizens spend a few weeks at their family's traditional fish camp every fall – catching, drying and freezing salmon and other fish for winter food. Methods of setting nets under the ice in winter are still known and used.

Land claim agreements ensure Yukon First Nations will always have special food fish rights, while the resource is generously shared among all users. As long as we care for the resource together, and show mutual cultural respect, the future of fishing and outdoor enjoyment is as bright as ever.

For more information

Ask for a copy of the annual [Yukon Fishing Regulations Summary](#) booklet and the [Angler's Guide to Yukon Stocked Lakes](#), available at Department of Environment offices and Visitor Information Centres.

Contact

Fisheries Section
Department of Environment
Box 2703 (V-5A)
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6
Tel: (867) 667-5721
Email: fisheries@gov.yk.ca
www.env.gov.yk.ca/fishing

Fishing on Yukon time

BEAUFORT SEA



LEGEND

- Fishing spots
- Park or protected area
- Capital city
- Community
- Primary road
- Secondary road
- Secondary road (seasonal)
- Local road
- Local road (seasonal)
- International boundary
- Territorial boundary

Yukon Protected Areas

- Natural environment park
- Wilderness preserve
- Ecological reserve
- Habitat protection area
- Wildlife sanctuary
- Special management area
- Area awaiting designation
- National park
- National wildlife area

Federal Protected Areas

- National park
- National wildlife area

"...headed out for some more mushroom picking and lake trout fishing. The fishing was quite easy. The lake was glassy and there was a defined drop off. The wind gently drifted us along this drop-off and we let the kids cast Len Thompsons, jigs, spinners... you name it. The 2-3 pound lake trout were active and everywhere. We could even sight fish them."

— Dennis Zimmermann

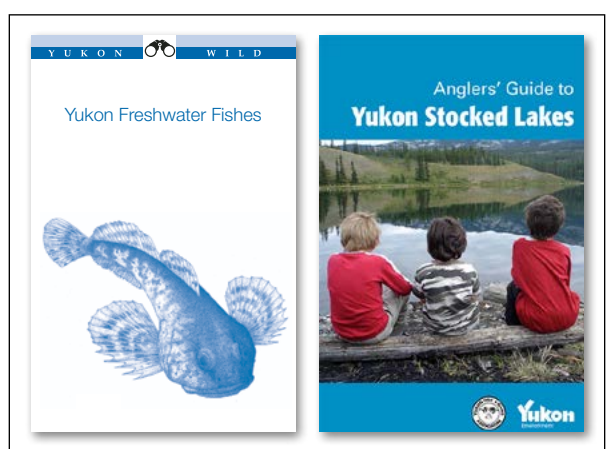
Fishing Spots & Species Commonly Found

	Arctic Grayling Lake Trout	Northern Pike	Whitefish	Dolly Varden	Bull Trout	Rainbow Trout	Burbot	*Chinook Salmon	*Coho Salmon	*Sockeye Salmon
1 ALASKA HIGHWAY										
1			AG	NP	W					
2			AG	NP	W					B
3			AG				BT			
4			AG				BT			
5			AG							
6			AG							
7			AG		W					
8			AG							
9			AG	NP	W				B	I
10			AG	NP	W				B	
11			AG	NP	W				B	
12			AG							
13			AG	NP	W				B	I
14			AG							
2 AISIHIK ROAD										
15			AG				RT			
16			AG		W				B	
17			AG	NP	W				B	
3 KLONDIKE HIGHWAY										
18			AG	NP	W				B	
19			AG							
20			AG	NP	W				B	I
21			AG							
22				NP	W					
23			AG							
24			AG	NP	W					
25			AG							
26			AG							
27			AG							CH
28			AG						B	I
3 HAINES ROAD										
29			AG		W		RT			
30			AG		W		RT			
31			AG	NP	W				B	
32			AG		W	DV			B	SO
33						DV	RT		CH	CO
34			AG			DV	RT		CH	CO
35			AG			DV	RT		CH	SO
4 ROBERT CAMPBELL HIGHWAY										
36			AG	NP	W				B	
37			AG		W		BT			
38			AG	NP	W		BT		B	
39			AG		W					
40			AG	NP	W				B	
41			AG	NP	W				B	I
42			AG	NP	W				B	CH
5 DEMPSTER HIGHWAY										
43			AG							CH
44			AG			DV				
45			AG		W					
46			AG							
47			AG							
6 CANOL ROAD										
48			AG		W				B	
49			AG		W					
50			AG							
51			AG							
52			AG	NP	W				B	
53			AG							
7 ATLIN ROAD										
54			AG	NP	W					
55			AG	NP	W					
8 TAGISH ROAD										
56			AG	NP	W					
57			AG	NP	W					
9 TOP OF THE WORLD HIGHWAY										
58			AG							
10 SILVER TRAIL										
59			AG	NP	W				B	CH
60			AG	NP	W				B	
61			AG	NP	W					
WHITEHORSE AREA										
62			AG	NP	W				B	
63			AG				RT			
64			AG							
65			AG				RT			

* Late summer only (spawning). Seasonal closures apply.
** National park fishing licence required.

On the end of your line
Live bait is not permitted in Yukon and there are no worms here. Yukon anglers mainly use artificial lures and sometimes bait a hook or jig with shrimp or a piece of meat or fish.

How to fly fish with spincasting gear
Tie a fly on your line then put a bobber about 1-2 metres (3-6 ft) above it. The bobber will give you enough weight to cast the fly, and usually will not interfere with the take. It's a great way to fish grayling.



For more information about fish and other Yukon fishing opportunities check out Yukon Freshwater Fishes and the Angler's Guide to Yukon Stocked Lakes.