



## Chain Pickerel

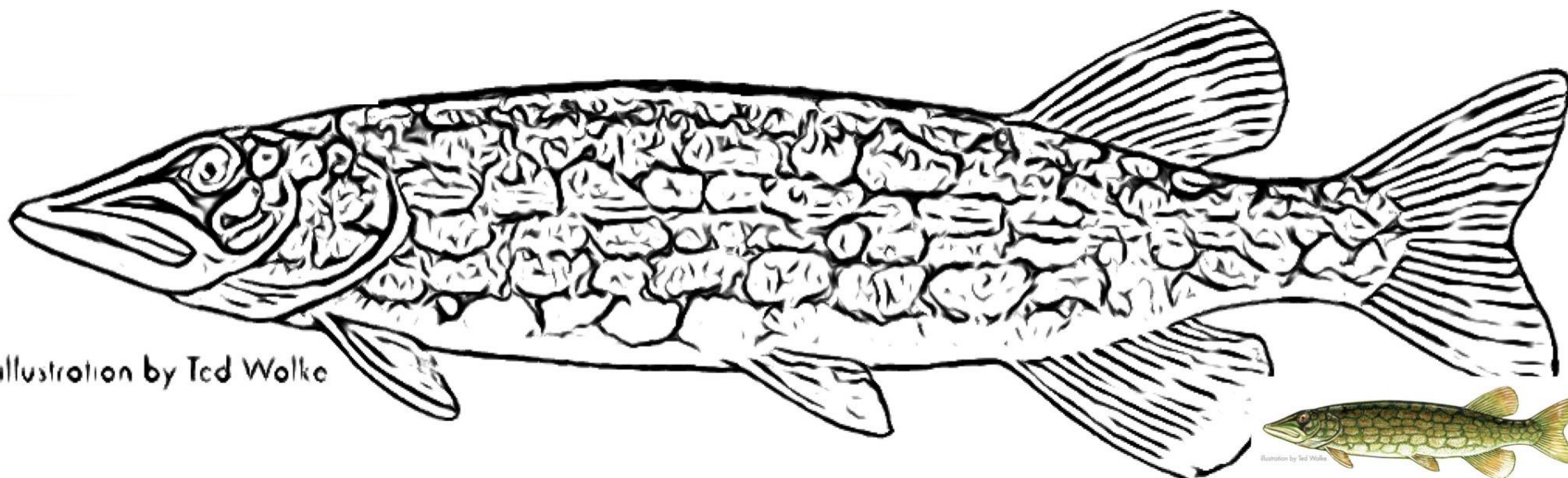


Illustration by Ted Wolke

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Chain Pickerel are the most abundant and widely distributed member of Pennsylvania's pike family. They are also the most often caught, biting the angler's bait or lure readily. The Chain Pickerel's original range was Atlantic and Gulf Coast tributaries, but the fish has been introduced elsewhere. In Pennsylvania, Chain Pickerel are restricted to the Delaware, Susquehanna and Potomac River watersheds. They are most common in the glaciated Pocono northeast.

Chain Pickerel can grow to more than 30 inches long, but one of 25 inches and four or five pounds is considered a trophy in Pennsylvania. The state record is an eight-pounder. Two-pound Pickerel are common where the fish have enough to eat. The Chain Pickerel hides easily in its weedy habitat, with its dark, greenish-yellow back, fading to lighter yellow-green along the sides. Over the sides is a pattern of dark chainlike markings that gives the fish its name. The belly is white. A dark mark, like a clown's painted tear, appears below each eye. The fins are unmarked and pale. As is typical of Pickerel, both the cheek and the opercle, or gill cover, are fully scaled. Chain Pickerel have a long snout. The distance from the tip of the nose to the front of the eye is greater than the distance from the back of the eye to the end of the gill cover.