

BURBOT

(Lota lota)

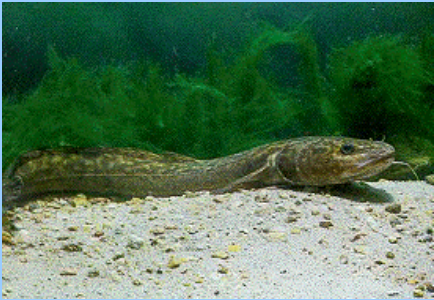
Oneida Lake Status:
Common

- Only Oneida Lake fish to spawn under the ice
- Population decreasing in Oneida Lake
- Fun to catch while ice fishing

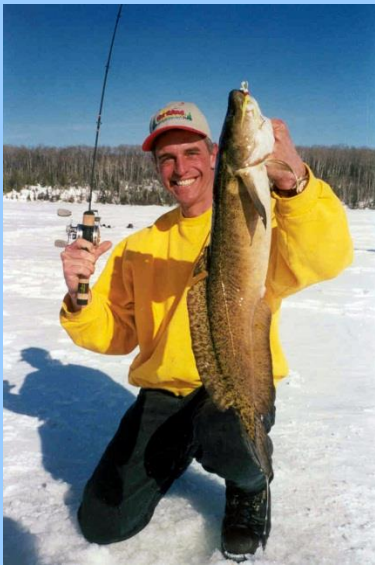
Burbot are odd looking fish, resembling a cross between a bullhead catfish and an American eel. They have an elongated body, long dorsal fins, and a single prominent chin barbel (whisker). In Oneida Lake, individuals may reach lengths of 27 inches and weigh 7.5 pounds. They have a dark brown back, yellowish tan sides with dark splotches, and a yellow belly. When touched, burbot have a slimy feeling because they are covered with tiny, deeply-embedded scales. This slippery skin texture has given rise to its nicknames, “ling” and “lawyer”.

In Oneida Lake, burbot eat a diet of mostly yellow perch and pumpkinseed sunfish, but also eat crayfish, amphipods, and scuds. They are cold water fish found sporadically across New York State, and are the only freshwater fish in the state to spawn under the ice during winter. In Oneida Lake burbot are found primarily in deep water, but will live in cool, shallower water if there are good hiding places. Because of increasing Oneida Lake water temperatures, burbot populations have been steadily declining.

Burbot are unique in being the only freshwater codfish in the world. They can be caught throughout the year, and put up a good fight if hooked. Oneida Lake anglers will occasionally catch one, but most do not eat them.



Burbot resting on a lake bottom



Oneida Lake anglers catch burbot during the winter: <http://www.icefishingworld.com/articles/eelpout.jpg>



Detailed burbot drawing



Oneida Lake burbot being measured by researchers

Prepared by:

Alexander Sonneborn
Cornell Biological Field Station

Edited June 2013