WISCONSIN

SALMON & TROUT GUIDE

Lake Michigan, Lake Superior and the river runs

Kings, coho, steelhead, browns and lake trout.



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Guide

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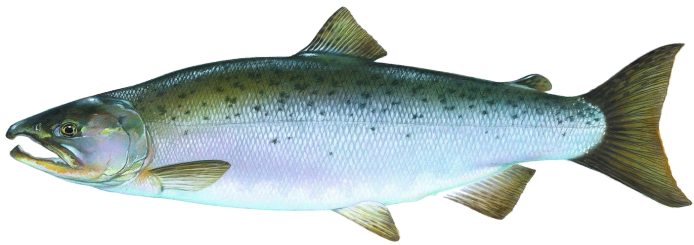

Wisconsin Salmon & Trout Guide
First edition, October 2026

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Read this first. Fishing rules change every year and differ by lake. Everything about seasons, sizes and bag limits in this book is for the 2026–27 season, checked 2026-10-10. Always check the current Wisconsin DNR rules and your lake's own rules before you fish. Depth maps are not for navigation. Ice is never guaranteed safe. You are responsible for your own safety and for following the law.

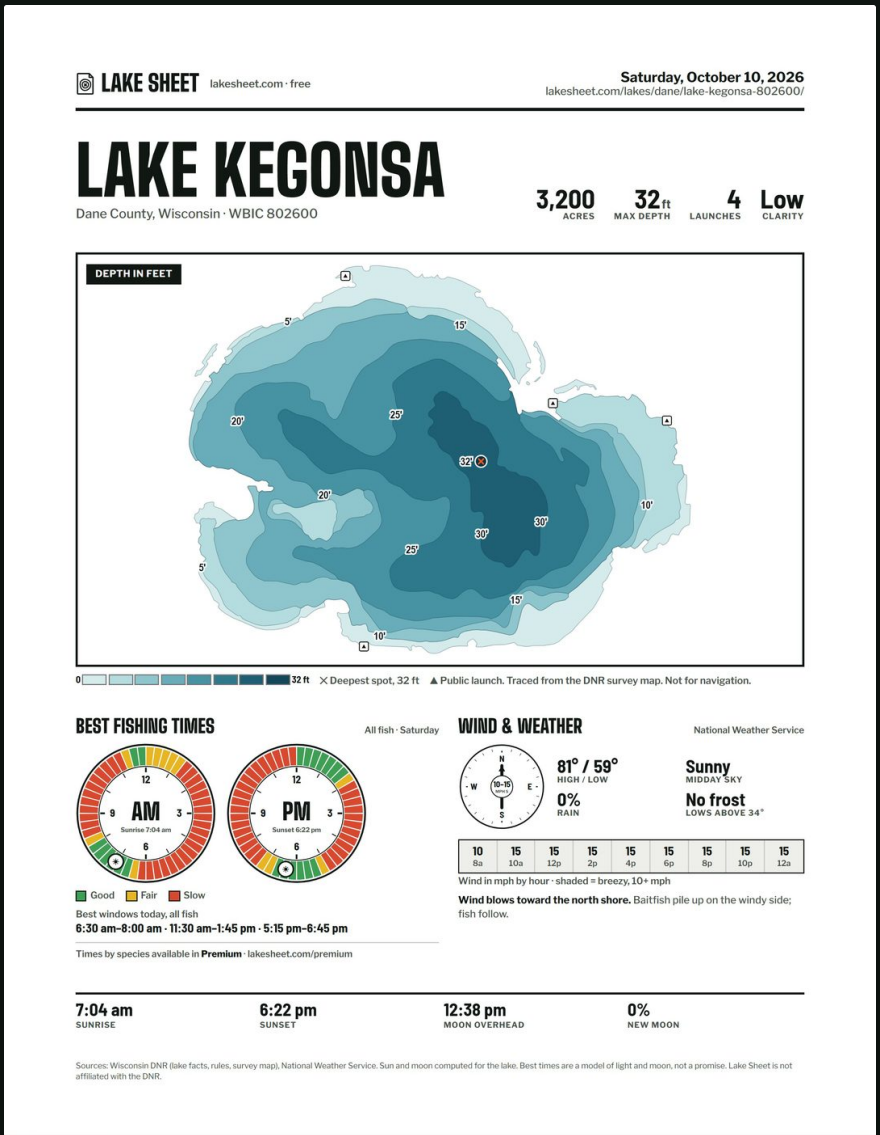
Lake Sheet is not affiliated with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. Lake facts come from DNR survey and stocking records as published by Lake Sheet; see the sources at the back of the book.

lakesheet.com

FREE WITH THIS BOOK

YOUR FREE LAKE SHEET

Free for more than 4,600 Wisconsin lakes: two printable pages, made for the boat. This is the real sheet for Lake Kegonsa.



LAKE SHEET lakesheet.com · free

Saturday, October 10, 2026
lakesheet.com/lakes/dane/lake-kegonsa-802600/

LAKE KEGONSA

Dane County, Wisconsin · WBIC 802600

3,200	32 ft	4	Low
ACRES	MAX DEPTH	LAUNCHES	CLARITY

DEPTH IN FEET

5' 15' 20' 25' 32' 20' 10' 30' 30' 25' 5' 15' 10'

0 32 ft · ✕ Deepest spot, 32 ft · ▲ Public launch. Traced from the DNR survey map. Not for navigation.

BEST FISHING TIMES

All fish · Saturday

AM — Sunrise 7:04 am

PM — Sunset 6:22 pm

Good · Fair · Slow

Best windows today, all fish
6:30 am–8:00 am · 11:30 am–1:45 pm · 5:15 pm–6:45 pm

Times by species available in **Premium** · lakesheet.com/premium

WIND & WEATHER

National Weather Service

81° / 59°
HIGH / LOW

0%
RAIN

Sunny
MIDDAY SKY

No frost
LOWS ABOVE 34°

10	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15
8a	10a	12p	2p	4p	6p	8p	10p	12a

Wind in mph by hour · shaded = breezy, 10+ mph

Wind blows toward the north shore. Baitfish pile up on the windy side; fish follow.

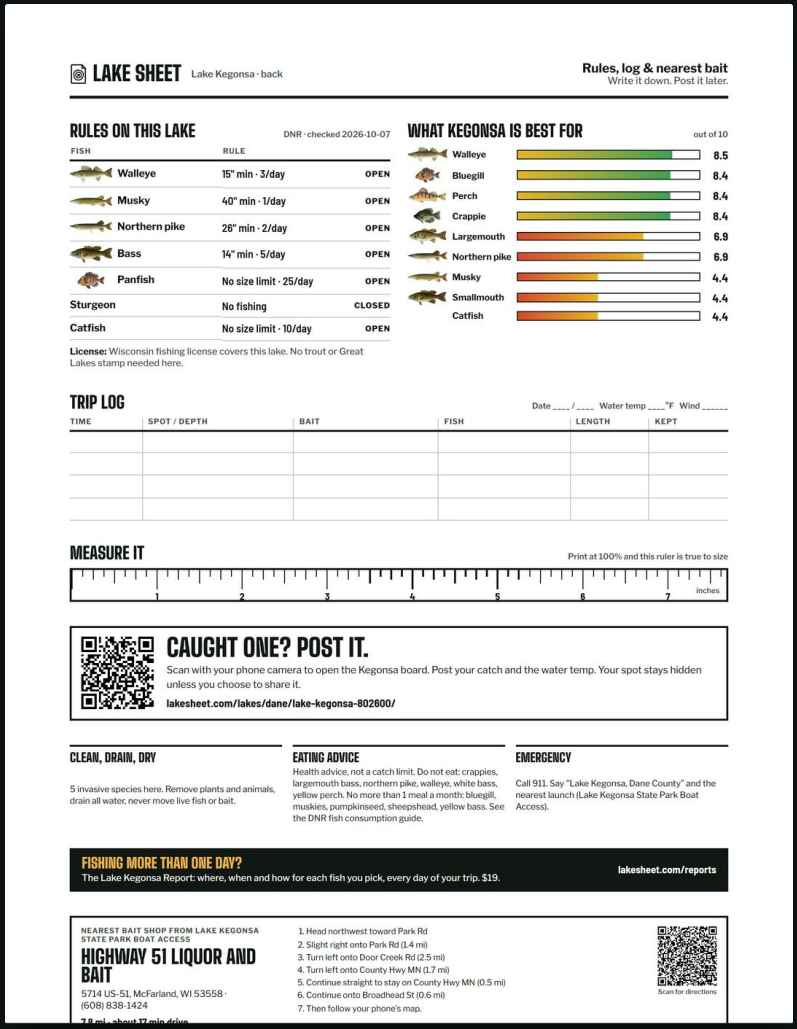
7:04 am	6:22 pm	12:38 pm	0%
SUNRISE	SUNSET	MOON OVERHEAD	NEW MOON

Sources: Wisconsin DNR (lake facts, rules, survey map), National Weather Service. Sun and moon computed for the lake. Best times are a model of light and moon, not a promise. Lake Sheet is not affiliated with the DNR.

1. **Depth map** traced from the DNR survey, deepest spot marked (traced lakes)
2. **Lake facts:** acres, max depth, launches, clarity
3. **Best times** from the sun and moon on AM and PM dials
4. **Wind and weather** by the hour, and which shore the wind hits
5. **Sun and moon** times for the lake
6. **Sources and date** on every fact

THE BACK OF THE SHEET

RULES, LOG & NEAREST BAIT



LAKE SHEET Lake Kegonsa · back

Rules, log & nearest bait
Write it down. Post it later.

RULES ON THIS LAKE

DNR · checked 2026-10-07

FISH	RULE	
Walleye	15" min · 3/day	OPEN
Musky	40" min · 1/day	OPEN
Northern pike	26" min · 2/day	OPEN
Bass	14" min · 5/day	OPEN
Panfish	No size limit · 25/day	OPEN
Sturgeon	No fishing	CLOSED
Catfish	No size limit · 10/day	OPEN

License: Wisconsin fishing license covers this lake. No trout or Great Lakes stamp needed here.

WHAT KEGONSA IS BEST FOR

out of 10

Walleye	8.5
Bluegill	8.4
Perch	8.4
Crappie	8.4
Largemouth	6.9
Northern pike	6.9
Musky	4.4
Smallmouth	4.4
Catfish	4.4

TRIP LOG

Date ____ / ____ Water temp ____°F Wind _____

TIME	SPOT / DEPTH	BAIT	FISH	LENGTH	KEPT

MEASURE IT

Print at 100% and this ruler is true to size

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 inches

CAUGHT ONE? POST IT.

Scan with your phone camera to open the Kegonsa board. Post your catch and the water temp. Your spot stays hidden unless you choose to share it.

lakesheet.com/lakes/dane/lake-kegonsa-802600/

CLEAN, DRAIN, DRY

5 invasive species here. Remove plants and animals, drain all water, never move live fish or bait.

EATING ADVICE

Health advice, not a catch limit. Do not eat: crappies, largemouth bass, northern pike, walleye, white bass, yellow perch. No more than 1 meal a month: bluegill, muskies, pumpkinseed, sheepshead, yellow bass. See the DNR fish consumption guide.

EMERGENCY

Call 911. Say "Lake Kegonsa, Dane County" and the nearest launch (Lake Kegonsa State Park Boat Access).

FISHING MORE THAN ONE DAY?
The Lake Kegonsa Report: where, when and how for each fish you pick, every day of your trip. $19.
lakesheet.com/reports

NEAREST BAIT SHOP FROM LAKE KEGONSA STATE PARK BOAT ACCESS

HIGHWAY 51 LIQUOR AND BAIT

5714 US-51, McFarland, WI 53558 · (608) 838-1424

7.8 mi · about 17 min drive

1. Head northwest toward Park Rd
2. Slight right onto Park Rd (1.4 mi)
3. Turn left onto Door Creek Rd (2.5 mi)
4. Turn left onto County Hwy MN (1.7 mi)
5. Continue straight to stay on County Hwy MN (0.5 mi)
6. Continue onto Broadhead St (0.6 mi)
7. Then follow your phone's map.

Scan for directions

1. **This lake's rules** for every fish, from the DNR
2. **What the lake is best for,** rated by fish
3. **Trip log** and a true-size **ruler**
4. **Invasive species** and eating advice
5. **Nearest bait shop** we know of, with turn-by-turn directions
6. Scan to post your catch

lakesheet.com

Find your lake, print it, take it in the boat

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HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book covers Wisconsin's big-water salmon and trout: chinook (king) and coho salmon, steelhead, brown trout and lake trout, on **Lake Michigan, Green Bay, Lake Superior** and their rivers.

Say it plainly: the Great Lakes are not Lake Sheet lakes. There is no Lake Sheet for Lake Michigan, Lake Superior or their rivers. For those waters this book gives you the DNR's own numbers: stocking and harvest port by port, the rules, the eating advice and where the DNR posts weekly reports. The Lake Sheet part of the book is **inland lake trout**: deep, cold lakes stocked with lake trout, each with a QR code to its free sheet (Chapter 7).

IF YOU HAVE A BOAT

1. Chapter 3: what's biting this month, and how deep.
2. Chapter 4: downriggers, divers, boards and lures.
3. Chapter 5.1–5.5: setting a trolling spread, step by step.
4. Chapter 6: water temperature, wind and upwellings.

IF YOU DON'T

1. Chapter 2: piers, harbors and the river runs, port by port.
2. Chapter 5.6–5.8: piers and rivers.
3. Chapter 5.10: what a charter trip costs and how it works.
4. Chapter 9: what you can eat, and how often.

The QR codes. Every lake trout lake in Chapter 7 and the two worked examples in Chapter 6 have a code. Scan it to open that lake's free Lake Sheet: launches, best-times dials, wind by hour, the nearest bait shop (when one is in our list), stocking and rules. As of October 2026, lakesheet.com has free Lake Sheets for more than 4,600 Wisconsin lakes, with more added each week.

The rules here are for the **2026–27 season**, checked October 8–10, 2026. Great Lakes, tributary and inland lake trout rules all differ (Chapter 8). Check the current DNR rules before you keep a fish.

The eating advice for Great Lakes fish is strict, and big Lake Michigan lake trout are **do not eat** (Chapter 9).



CHAPTER 1

MEET THE FISH

Six fish make up Wisconsin's Great Lakes salmon and trout fishing. Only one of them, the lake trout, was here before people arrived; brook trout were here too but are a small part of the big-lake catch. The rest were brought in, most of them in the 1960s, to rebuild a fishery that had collapsed. Most coho, steelhead, browns and lake trout you catch in Wisconsin's part of Lake Michigan started life in a hatchery, but more than half the young kings in the lake are now wild fish from Michigan streams (1.1). Knowing which fish is which matters: the rules, the eating advice and the way you fish all change by species.

1.1 Chinook (king) salmon · **1.2** Coho salmon · **1.3** Steelhead and rainbow trout · **1.4** Brown trout · **1.5** Lake trout · **1.6** Splake, brook trout and the rare ones · **1.7** Telling them apart · **1.8** Records · **1.9** Life cycles · **1.10** How the fishery was built

1.1
CHINOOK (KING) SALMON

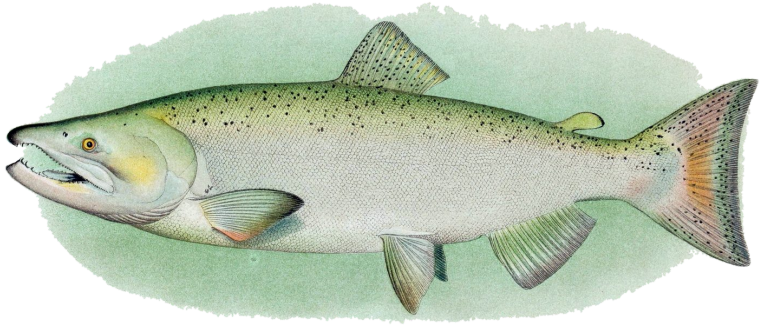


FIG 1.1 **Chinook (king) salmon**: black mouth and gums, spots on both lobes of a square-ish tail, 15 to 19 anal-fin rays. A. Hoen and Co., 1907.

The chinook is the biggest salmon in the Great Lakes and the fish most charter boats are built around. It lives in open water, follows schools of alewife and smelt, and prefers water of about **50–57°F**, which in summer often means 50 to 100 feet down or more.

- **Life:** stocked in spring as fingerlings; most return to spawn after 2 to 4 summers in the lake. Every chinook dies after it spawns.
- **Run:** mature kings head for the river or harbor where they were stocked from late August into October.
- **Wild fish:** Wisconsin streams are too warm and silty for salmon eggs to survive, but Michigan streams do produce chinook. The DNR says 50 to 66% of the young chinook in Lake Michigan are wild, and 68% of chinook checked in 2018 had no fin clip.

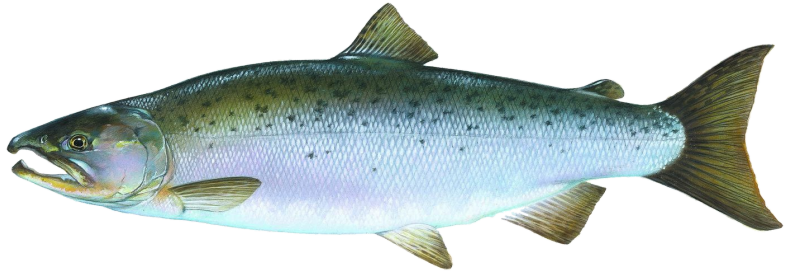
CHINOOK IN WISCONSIN, BY THE DNR'S NUMBERS

Stocked in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan waters, 2024	1,361,857 fingerlings
Kept by anglers, 2024	163,923, the most since 2012; best month July
Average weight of a 30-inch king, 2024	10.7 lb

1.2
COHO SALMON

COHO SALMON

Oncorhynchus kisutch



TELL IT BY	White or gray gums at the base of the teeth, small spots on the back and the upper half of the tail only, a slightly forked tail, and 12 to 15 rays in the anal fin.
LOOKS LIKE	Chinook: black gums and spots on both lobes of the tail. Steelhead: white mouth, a square tail spotted all over, a pink band along the side.
COLOR	Steel-blue to slightly green back, bright silver sides, white belly. Spawning males turn dark red with a hooked jaw and a slight hump.
SIZE	DNR range 11–26 inches and up to 12 lb. In 2024 a 23-inch Lake Michigan coho weighed 3.8 lb on average.
WISCONSIN RECORD	26 lb 1.9 oz, 38.0 in — John Gregory, Lake Michigan, Milwaukee County, Aug. 21, 1999
EATS	Mostly alewife and rainbow smelt.

Coho are smaller and shorter-lived than kings and they come close to shore early. Spring coho fishing starts in southern Lake Michigan off Kenosha and Racine and moves north as the water warms. The DNR's preferred range is **54–57°F**.

- **Life:** most coho spawn after two summers in the lake; some males ("jacks") come back after one. All coho die after spawning.
- **2024:** anglers kept an estimated **210,891** coho, the most since the DNR's creel survey began in 1969.

1.3

STEELHEAD AND RAINBOW TROUT

Steelhead and rainbow trout are the same species. "Steelhead" means the silver, lake-run form that lives in the big lake and runs up rivers to spawn. Unlike salmon, a steelhead can spawn more than once and go back to the lake.



FIG 1.2 **Spawning male coho**: hooked jaw and a red flush. Live fish go far darker than this 1907 plate. A. Hoen and Co., 1907.



FIG 1.3 **Steelhead**, silver from the lake. A. Hoen and Co., 1907.



FIG 1.4 **Rainbow trout** in river color, pink band. S. F. Denton, 1896.

Wisconsin stocks different **strains** that run at different times, which is why there is a steelhead run in some river almost every month from September to May (DNR):

STRAIN	WHEN IT RUNS	BEST RIVER FISHING	TYPICAL SIZE
Skamania (summer run)	Starts late June–July	From mid-September, as rivers cool	Age 4: 28 in, 8 lb; age 5: 32 in, 12 lb
Chambers Creek (winter run)	Late fall through early spring	Mid-Nov to Dec, and March to early April	Age 3: 25 in, 6 lb; age 4: 29 in, 9.5 lb
Ganaraska	Nov–Dec, then late March–April	Spring; the last strain to leave the river	Age 3: 23 in; age 4: 26 in

From the DNR's Lake Michigan steelhead strain sheet. The DNR's stocking summary shows Skamania last stocked in 2022, and its FAQ names Chambers Creek and Ganaraska as the strains now stocked, so summer-run fish will get scarce.

1.4
BROWN TROUT

Brown trout came from Europe and have been stocked in Wisconsin's part of Lake Michigan since 1966. They handle warmer, shallower water than salmon, so they are the fish of cold harbors, warm-water discharges and shallow shorelines in spring and late fall. Since 2017 Wisconsin stocks only the **seeforellen** strain, a German strain that lives longer, grows bigger and spawns later (November and December). The state's outlying-water record, 41 lb 8 oz, is a seeforellen from off Racine.

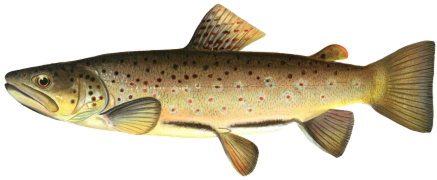


FIG 1.5 **Brown trout** in spawning color. Lake-run browns are silver with X-shaped marks. S. F. Denton, 1896.



FIG 1.6 **Lake trout**: light spots on dark gray-green, a deeply forked tail, a white mouth. S. F. Denton.

1.5
LAKE TROUT

The lake trout is the native top predator of the Great Lakes and of a few deep, cold inland lakes. It is a char, not a true trout. It likes the coldest water, about **48–52°F**, which in summer puts it near the bottom in deep water.

- **Growth:** slow. The DNR says lake trout mature at 6 or 7 years (24 to 28 inches) and can live more than 20 years.
- **Wild fish:** about 30% of lake trout in Wisconsin's Lake Michigan waters are now wild (DNR); stocked lake trout carry an adipose fin clip and a coded wire tag under the federal Great Lakes Mass Marking Program, which began in 2010 (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).
- **Lake Superior:** lake trout are the top predator and the fish Superior anglers want most. A deep-water, fat-bodied form called **siscowet** also lives there.

1.6

SPLAKE, BROOK TROUT AND THE RARE ONES

- **Splake** are a hatchery cross of lake trout and brook trout. Green Bay was stocked with splake from 1983 to 2007; the DNR stopped because few were caught. They still turn up in Lake Superior's Chequamegon Bay in winter. Lake Superior has a splake rule (15-inch minimum); the state record, 17 lb 14.5 oz, came from Green Bay in 2002.
- **Brook trout** are native. Wisconsin stocks about 50,000 St. Croix-strain brook trout a year into Lake Michigan (Manitowoc and Milwaukee in 2024). Lake Superior's lake-run brook trout, called **coasters**, are rare and protected by a 20-inch minimum.
- **Pink salmon** came by accident: they escaped into Lake Superior in Canada in 1956 and spread. Adults are small, in the low 20 inches, and males grow a hump.
- **Atlantic salmon** are occasional. The state record, 23 lb 15 oz, came from off Milwaukee in 1980.

1.7

TELLING THEM APART

The mouth and the tail sort out most fish in seconds.

	CHINOOK	COHO	STEELHEAD	BROWN TROUT	LAKE TROUT
Gums at the base of the teeth	Black	White or gray	White	White	White
Tail	Square-ish, spots on both lobes	Slight fork, spots on upper lobe only	Square, spotted all over	Square, few or no spots	Deeply forked
Body spots	Black, on the back	Small, back only	Small, black	Black (and red), X-shaped on lake fish	Light spots on dark
Anal fin rays	15–19	12–15	–	12 or fewer	–
Dies after spawning?	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

ID features from the DNR's Lake Michigan life-history leaflets.

1.8 RECORDS

FISH	RECORD	WHO, WHERE, WHEN
Chinook	44 lb 15 oz, 47.5 in	Josh Bostedt, Lake Michigan, Door Co., July 19, 1994
Coho	26 lb 1.9 oz, 38.0 in	John Gregory, Lake Michigan, Milwaukee Co., Aug. 21, 1999
Rainbow (outlying)	27 lb 2 oz, 42.5 in	Debbie Morrison, Lake Michigan, Kewaunee Co., July 26, 1997
Brown (outlying)	41 lb 8 oz, 40.6 in	Roger Hellen, Lake Michigan, Racine Co., July 16, 2010
Lake trout (outlying)	47 lb 0 oz	Waino Roose, Lake Superior, Bayfield Co., Sept. 9, 1946
Lake trout (inland)	35 lb 4 oz	Joseph Gotz, Big Green Lake, Green Lake Co., June 1, 1957
Brown (inland)	18 lb 6 oz, 34.3 in	Perry McKittrick, Lake Geneva, May 7, 1984
Splake	17 lb 14.5 oz, 32.0 in	Peter Radtke, Green Bay, Marinette Co., July 6, 2002
Brook (outlying)	10 lb 1 oz, 24.5 in	Nick Randazzo, Lake Michigan, Ozaukee Co., June 8, 1999
Pink salmon	6 lb 1.9 oz, 24.0 in	Patrick Couillard, Lake Michigan, Kewaunee Co., Aug. 10, 1999

Wisconsin DNR Record Fish List, revised September 2026. "Outlying" means the Great Lakes and Green Bay.

Live-release records (length only) include a 42-inch chinook from the Sheboygan River (2020), a 39.75-inch lake trout from Big Green Lake (2023) and a 34.25-inch steelhead from the Sheboygan River (March 2026).

CHECK THE FIN CLIP

A missing **adipose fin** (the small fleshy fin on the back, just in front of the tail) means a stocked fish. Agencies use fin clips to track stocking, which is how the DNR knows most chinook now are wild. Stocked kings have been clipped since 2011 (with a coded wire tag from 2011 to 2016), and stocked rainbows clipped and tagged since 2018 (DNR). **If you keep a rainbow or lake trout missing only its adipose fin, the DNR wants the head:** bag it with the DNR's tag recovery form (species, date, place, length), freeze it, and drop it at a DNR office or a cooperating business. Note the clip in your log.

1.9

LIFE CYCLES

Coho and chinook spawn in fall and die; steelhead spawn in winter and spring, browns in November and December, and lake trout on rocky reefs in fall, and all three can spawn again. Why do Wisconsin's runs need hatcheries? The DNR's answer: Wisconsin's Lake Michigan streams get too warm in summer for young fish, and silt smothers eggs in the gravel. So the DNR collects eggs from returning fish at three stations: the **Root River Steelhead Facility** in Racine, the **Besadny Anadromous Fisheries Facility** on the Kewaunee River, and the **Strawberry Creek** weir in Door County, the source of Wisconsin's chinook eggs.

1.10

HOW THE FISHERY WAS BUILT

Lake trout supported a huge commercial fishery until the 1940s. Overfishing, then the **sea lamprey**, a parasite that reached the upper Great Lakes in the 1930s, wiped them out. The DNR's numbers: Lake Michigan's commercial lake trout catch was over 6 million pounds in 1944, 34 pounds in 1954, and the fish were probably gone by 1956. With the big predators gone, alewives, a small invasive fish, exploded.

The fix came in steps. A chemical that kills lamprey larvae in streams was found in 1958 and in use from 1960. Wisconsin began stocking lake trout in 1965, brown trout in 1966, coho in 1968 and chinook in 1969 (Michigan's

big coho plantings in 1966 started it all). The salmon ate the alewives and built one of the best freshwater sport fisheries in the world.