

RAINBOW SMELT (*Osmerus mordax*)



Image by Doug Watkinson

Other common names: Smelt, American smelt, jack smelt, frostfish, icefish.

Identification: A proportionately long and slender fish with an adipose fin. Mouth is large and extends back to rear of eye; mouth has strong teeth on the jaws and tongue. Scales on the sides are easily shed when handled. Coloration: Back and upper sides are yellowish-olive or greenish. Sides have a bright silvery band extending from rear gill cover to base of tail; band frequently reflects a purplish-bluish iridescence. Underside of body is whitish. Size: commonly 6-10 inches.

Habitat: Smelt inhabit deep, cold, clear water lakes and may spawn either along lake shorelines or ascend tributary streams. Because of its strict habitat requirements, smelt populations are limited to relatively few lakes in Vermont.

Bait use: This is an important bait species especially during the ice fishing season for lake trout, landlocked salmon, and large trout. It is either obtained directly by angling or can be bought from some bait shops when in season. Smelt are also a highly esteemed table fish and are harvested in large numbers through the ice.