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WILDLIFE PORTRAIT SERIES NO. 2

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for *Sport Fishing USA*

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Fish and Wildlife Service

Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife

ARCTIC GRAYLING

(*Thymalus arcticus*)

Grayling are found in lakes and streams of the Alaskan and Canadian wilderness and occasionally in remote areas of Montana and Wyoming. The once famous Michigan grayling has long been extinct, a result of many factors including overfishing and logging which destroyed spawning areas and changed the character of the streams.

The spawning migration up tributary streams begins in early spring after the ice breaks up. Unlike most other members of the trout family, grayling do not build a redd, or nest. The eggs are scattered over the rocky spawning area and fall into crevices. A female deposits about 4,000 eggs which hatch in 2 to 3 weeks. The fry are helpless for the first week until the yolk-sac is absorbed. They start feeding on tiny aquatic life, but after a short time their chief diet is insects.

A 4-ounce fly rod with tapered line and leader and either a wet or dry fly is standard equipment for grayling fishing. Though its strike may be soft, the grayling puts up a fight complete with flashing leaps and spectacular charges. Most fish caught range from 10 to 14 inches and weigh less than a pound. The world record is a 29-inch grayling weighing almost 6 pounds.

BLUEFISH

(*Pomatomus saltatrix*)

Bluefish are widely distributed in the temperate and tropical waters off the Atlantic coast. They appear irregularly in vast schools which migrate between Cape Cod and the Gulf of Mexico.

Spawning is believed to occur throughout the range during spring and summer. Larvae, but not eggs, have been collected, so information on the life cycle is scant. The food of bluefish is fish, particularly menhaden, plus squid and crustaceans.

All fishing methods are successful, as bluefish take a hook in the same savage manner with which they pursue their food. Average size is 3 to 6 pounds and the world record is slightly over 24 pounds.

BROWN TROUT

(*Salmo trutta*)

Introduced into North America from Germany in 1883, the brown trout is native to the British Isles and the continent of Europe eastward to the Ural Mountains of Asia. Though more wary and difficult to catch than most native North American trout, the brown trout is a favorite of many anglers. Its secretive habits and preference for feeding on small insects in the evening and early morning provides a challenging sport for the fly fisherman.

At home in cool streams and lakes, the brown trout feeds on small fish, crayfish, and insects. It spawns in October or November on gravelly riffles, the eggs hatch in about 2 months. The brown trout will tolerate warmer water than brook trout and often thrives in slightly polluted waters where the latter can no longer survive.

Though averaging little more than half a pound in weight and 12 inches in length, brown trout often reach a large size. The world record fish was taken in Scotland in 1886 and weighed more than 39 pounds.

BROOK TROUT

(*Salvelinus fontinalis*)

The brook trout is native only to northeastern North America, but transplants have spread it throughout the United States and to many foreign countries. Brook trout inhabit cold, clear lakes and streams.

The spawning season begins in September and lasts through November. The female digs a redd, or nest, in the gravelly bottom and deposits 700 to 2,300 eggs. After fertilization, about 2 months of incubation are required before the eggs hatch. The brook trout feeds primarily on insects, but will also eat crayfish, mollusks, and other fish.

Fly fishing is the traditional method of catching brook trout, but baits such as cheese, salmon eggs, and worms are also effective. The world record is a 15-pound, 2-ounce brook trout caught in 1970 on a red and white spoon.

RAINBOW TROUT

(*Salmo gairdnerii*)

The rainbow trout originally ranged the plunging rivers of the Pacific coast, from central Mexico to Alaska's Bristol Bay, but it has been introduced throughout the United States and to many foreign countries.

Rainbow trout live in streams varying from small alpine brooks to large lowland rivers, and in lakes varying from lowland reservoirs to mountain lakes. The steelhead trout, a subspecies, spends most of its life in the ocean, returning to its native stream to spawn.

Spawning occurs in streams from December to June. The female digs a redd, or nest, in a riffle or at the lower end of a pool. The eggs are deposited in the pit, fertilized, then covered with gravel dislodged by digging from the upstream side of the redd. Incubation requires 80 days at water temperature of 40° F. but only 19 days of 60° F. The rainbow's diet ranges from microscopic plankton to fish, mollusks, and crustaceans.

So popular is this trout, so much in demand by fishermen, and so easily reared artificially, that it is the cause of perhaps half of all America's fish hatcheries. Anglers use a variety of tackle, lines and live bait, including flies, bucktails, spinners, minnows—even worms and cheese. The world record is 37 pounds, but an outstanding catch is a 10-pound fish.

CHANNEL CATFISH

(Ictalurus punctatus)

Historical distribution of the channel catfish was limited to the Mississippi drainage from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico; however, its unique adaptability to varied conditions has enabled man to introduce the species throughout the United States.

The catfish spawns from April to June under rocky ledges on deeply undercut banks, in submerged muskrat runs, or in hollow logs. The male cleans, guards, and maintains the nest where a female deposits up to 70,000 eggs. The eggs usually hatch within 10 days and the male remains with the small fish until they can fend for themselves.

The catfish is a nocturnal feeder, but even during the day it will go for any food that comes along, live or dead, plant or animal. It has proved valuable as a commercial fish, but it is still considered great sport. Fishermen use a variety of bait such as worms, cheese, chunks of soap, and artificial lures. The average weight of channel catfish varies with habitat, but the record catch is a 58-pound fish taken from the Santee-Cooper Reservoir in South Carolina.

BLACK CRAPPIE
(*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*)

WHITE CRAPPIE
(*Pomoxis annularis*)

The crappies were originally limited to the Eastern and Central United States, but both species have been transplanted throughout the country. The black crappie is found in cold, clear waters while the white crappie frequents warmer lakes and slow moving waters. They are often found together in lakes fed by swift streams.

Spawning in the South begins in early January, but in the North it is delayed until June or July. The male sweeps out a nest in gravelly areas located in shallow water. An 8-ounce female may spawn as many as 60,000 eggs which are guarded by the male until the fry hatch and begin swimming. Like all sunfish, crappies are carnivorous, feeding chiefly on insects, crustaceans, mollusks, and small fish.

A wide variety of baits, lures, and equipment can be used to catch crappies, which usually range from 8 to 12 inches long. A 2-pound crappie is considered an exceptional catch since the world record is a 5-pound, 3-ounce white crappie from Enid Reservoir in Mississippi.

NORTHERN PIKE

(*Esox lucius*)

Northern pike live in northern latitudes around the world. They prefer the weedy shallow waters of lakes and streams, but may also be found in deep rocky lakes. The North American range is from Alaska to Labrador and south through New England, and from the Hudson River drainage west to the Dakotas. Recent transplants have been made in Virginia, Missouri, and Arkansas.

Spawning activity begins in early spring as the fish move into the shallow waters of flooded marshes and meadows. A female can deposit up to 35,000 eggs over the submerged vegetation where they hatch in 1 to 2 weeks.

The adult fish feed on other fish and on mice, ducklings, frogs, and other available animals. Growth rate varies with the latitude. In Pennsylvania, a 1-year-old fish may weigh up to 1 pound, but the same size fish above the Arctic Circle may be 7 or 8 years old.

Trolling or casting with live minnows, spoons, or plugs are common methods to catch northern pike. Record size fish are over 40 inches long and weigh about 50 pounds.

SMALLMOUTH BASS

(*Micropterus dolomieu*)

A member of the sunfish family and a close relative of the largemouth bass, the smallmouth bass historically was common in waters of Eastern United States and Canada, ranging as far south as the upper Mississippi and Ohio River systems. Because of its reputation as one of the gamest of sport fish, the smallmouth bass has been transplanted throughout the United States and to foreign countries. It spawns in the spring as water temperature approaches 60° with the male building a nest and guarding the young which remain in schools for a short time. The protection of the young ceases as the schools break up and the young fish then become fair game for any predator which happens to be in the area.

Smallmouth bass can be taken with live bait such as frogs and crayfish or with artificial lures. The world record catch is an 11-pound, 15-ounce fish; however, 1- to 3-pound fish constitute most of the catch.

STRIPED MARLIN

(Tetrapuris audax)

Because of its speed, great strength, and large size, the striped marlin is one of the most sought after trophy fishes. It is found in the Pacific as far north as Newport Beach, California, in the Gulf of California, and off the coast of Chile, its most famous fishing grounds. The marlins are generally solitary in nature although they sometimes are found in small groups. Specialized tackle and a boat with a skilled captain are necessary to locate and catch marlin.

Very little is known about the spawning and life history of this species. A majority of the fish that are caught weigh between 250 and 350 pounds and the world record striped marlin is 415 pounds, and 11 feet long.