



LAKE TROUT LIFE HISTORY

Lake trout (*Salvelinus namaycush*) are one of Alaska's most spectacular freshwater fish species. Despite their common name, lake trout are not a trout at all. They are, in fact, the largest of the freshwater char. The Alaska record is 47 pounds, while the world record lake trout, caught in Canada, weighed in at a hefty 102 pounds. They are also notable for their long life span, with some fish living to be over 60 years old. They are found in deep lakes throughout most of the state, except for parts of southwestern and southeastern Alaska. Many of Alaska's most avid anglers consider the lake trout to be the pinnacle of Alaska's freshwater species and are willing to put in the hours and effort to catch these remarkable fish.

**BE SURE TO CHECK
THE CURRENT SPORT
FISHING REGULATIONS
FOR THE WATERBODY
IN WHICH YOU PLAN
TO FISH!**

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ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

SPORT FISH DIVISION



LAKE TROUT CATCH & RELEASE



CATCH AND RELEASE TIPS TO HELP THE FISH SURVIVE

TIP #1 USE SINGLE HOOKS

Treble hooks pierce up to three points in the mouth and can be difficult to remove from the fish. This is especially true of lures equipped with two treble hooks. Single hooks, even lures equipped with two single hooks, reduce excessive hooking of fish and are easier on the fish during removal.

TIP #2 USE ARTIFICIAL LURES

Hooking mortality increases when fish are hooked in the gills or deeply in their throats, or stomachs. Fish swallow baited hooks more often than artificial lures. If a fish swallows a hook, cut your line and leave the hook in place. Attempting to remove a deeply swallowed hook can be fatal to the fish. If the hook is in the gills and the fish is bleeding badly, keep the fish if the regulations allow and you have not already met your daily bag limit.

TIP #3 ACTIVELY FISH YOUR GEAR

It's easiest to properly set a hook by holding your fishing rod and setting the hook yourself. The use of stationary baits and lures removes the angler from the actual hook set in open water fisheries. In winter, the use of tip-ups and dead sticking with a rod also removes the angler from the process of setting the hook. Fish tend to be hooked more deeply in these cases and are far less likely to survive after release.

TIP #4 LAND THE FISH QUICKLY

After setting the hook, land the fish as quickly as possible. Be sure to use heavy enough tackle and a suitable test line, so that you don't have to play the fish to exhaustion.



TIP #5 HANDLE THE FISH GENTLY AND RETURN IT TO THE WATER QUICKLY

Use a landing net and keep the fish in the water as much as possible. Have a pair of needle nose pliers to quickly remove the hook. Cradle the fish horizontally by grasping it just behind the head and just ahead of the tail. When ice fishing, reach down into the hole and grasp the lower jaw instead of pulling on the hook. For large fish, some anglers grasp below the jaw where the plate covering the gills meets the lower jaw. However, be careful not to squeeze a gill arch which will cause damage to the fish.

Do not lay the fish on the snow or ice and never hold the fish vertically from either the head or the tail. Release the fish headfirst into the hole. It is important to get the fish back in the water as quickly as possible. The longer a fish is out of the water the harder it is for them to recover. In addition to the possibility of suffocation, the corneas of a fish's eyes can freeze if held too long out of water in negative temperatures.

TIP #6 LIMIT CATCH AND RELEASE FISHING DURING SPAWNING SEASON

Lake trout in Alaska spawn during mid-September and early October. Limit your catch and release fishing during the spawning period. The stress of being caught and handled may lower the chance that a fish can spawn successfully that year.

TIP #7 TARGET OTHER SPECIES

Once you have landed your daily bag limit or you have released a fish with a hook in it, direct your fishing effort toward other species such as burbot, Arctic grayling, or whitefish.