Know your Great Lakes Trout & Salmon Species

Anglers on the Great Lakes have the opportunity to catch a variety of species - including many different salmon and trout. Often times these species can look very similar to one another. This document provides some tips for identifying the most commonly caught Great Lakes trout and salmon species.

**Atlantic Salmon:** This native of the north Atlantic Ocean is known throughout the world as an exciting sportfish. It was introduced into the Great Lakes in 1972. The average adult lake-run Atlantic salmon weights 8-10 pounds. Michigan’s record is 32.62 pounds.

![Atlantic Salmon](image)

**Chinook (King) Salmon:** This species is native to the Pacific Ocean from Southern California to Alaska. Michigan introduced Chinooks to the Great Lakes in 1967. Weights typically run from 20-30 pounds. Michigan’s record is 48.06 pounds.

![Chinook Salmon](image)

**Coho Salmon:** This species is also native to the Pacific Coast of North America. Michigan first started stocking cohos in 1966. Adults average 8 pounds. Michigan’s record is 30.56 pounds.

![Coho Salmon](image)

Illustrations of full fish courtesy of Joseph R. Tomelleri.
Rainbow (Steelhead) Trout: This species lives, grows and reaches spawning size in the Great Lakes. They are native to the North American coastal streams of the Pacific Ocean. Average adult size for Great Lakes steelhead is 9-10 pounds. Michigan’s record is 26.50 pounds.

Brown Trout: This species is a close relative of the Atlantic salmon and was brought to North American waters as exotics. On the average, lake-run adults weigh 8 pounds. Michigan’s record is 41.45 pounds.

Lake Trout, Splake & Brook Trout: Generally these species may be distinguished from the other trout and salmon by the whitish spotted or wormy markings on their backs and by the white leading edge of their lower fins. Separation of the three is much more difficult.

For more information on Michigan’s fish species, visit Michigan.gov/Fishing

Illustrations of full fish courtesy of Joseph R. Tomelleri.