Atlantic Whitefish

Coregonus huntsmani

Habitat

The Atlantic whitefish is anadromous; they live their life in saltwater and return to freshwater to spawn. It is important that there are no blockages in the river to ease up and downstream migrations.

Physical Appearance

- Silvery sides, a silvery white underbelly, and a dark blue or green back.
- No spots or upper body markings.
- Between 90 and 100 scales along the lateral line.
- Small but well-developed teeth.

Identification Tips

1. Upper and lower jaw equal in length.
2. Adipose fin present on wild fish.
3. Deeply forked tail.
4. Larger scales than trout and salmon.

Anadromous Length: 38 cm
Landlocked Length: 22 cm

Threats

- River blockages such as dams
- Invasive species
- Acidification
- Habitat loss and degradation

Spawning

Atlantic whitefish migrate into freshwater in early fall and move upstream in early October/November with spawning occurring in late fall or winter. They overwinter in freshwater and return to the ocean in spring. Spawning of the landlocked population also occurs in early winter.

Food

The main food source in the Tusket River includes amphipods, periwinkles and marine worms. In the Petite Rivière, plankton, insects, minnows, and fish eggs dominate.

Similar Species

Atlantic whitefish are commonly confused with brook trout and Atlantic salmon. Brook trout vary in colour from green to brown and have red dots surrounded by blue halos along the flank. Atlantic salmon vary in back colour from blue to green to brown. Their sides and stomach are silvery with black spots above the lateral line when they are in seawater. Atlantic whitefish have between 90 and 100 scales on the lateral line, while Atlantic salmon have between 109 and 124 scales. Brook trout scales are too small to count.

Anadromous Length: 38 cm
Landlocked Length: 22 cm

Brook Trout

Atlantic Salmon

Contact DFO at 902.354.6030 with any observed reports of Atlantic whitefish.