

PIKE (Esox Lucius, Linnaeus, 1758)

Black Sea and Adriatic Basin

Native species

V – Vulnerable species

The pike grows up to 100 cm with a maximum length of 150 cm. Females are larger than males. It has a long, cylindrical body with a long head ending in a broad, flat, duckbill-shaped snout filled with strong, backward-pointing, conical teeth. The lower jaw is longer than the upper and the mouth opening extends almost to the eyes. The dorsal fin is located far back on the body, while the pelvic fins are positioned near the anal fin. The back is dark olive or grey-green, the sides are lighter and marbled with pale spots and the belly is whitish. The dorsal, caudal and anal fins are spotted and the lateral line is often interrupted.

Pike inhabit slow-flowing or standing waters among aquatic and submerged vegetation. Males reach sexual maturity in the 2nd year and females in the 3rd year. Spawning takes place from February to April in shallow, vegetated areas of rivers, lakes, or flooded meadows. Females lay up to 100,000 eggs per kilogram of body weight on aquatic plants.

Juveniles feed on plankton and at 4 to 7 cm in length, they begin to hunt other fish. They are cannibalistic. They live in freshwaters across Europe, Asia and North America. They inhabit slow-flowing rivers, riverbends and lakes throughout Europe, and have been introduced to Spain, Portugal, Scotland and Iceland.

In Slovenia, the pike is widespread in both the Black Sea and Adriatic basins. It lives in Lake Bled, the Sava, Mura and Drava rivers, the lower Savinja, the Kolpa, the Krka, various reservoirs and tributaries of the Soča River. Its most well-known habitat is Lake Cerknica.

The European pike population remains large mainly due to artificial breeding programs. Its main threats are water pollution and the destruction of spawning grounds due to river regulation. It is protected by fishing size limits, closed seasons and catch restrictions.

Pike – Esox lucius (Linnaeus, 1758)

River basins in Slovenia: Adriatic, Danube

Spawning season: February to April

Number of eggs: 100,000 to 200,000

Sexual maturity: 2 years (male), 3 years (female)

Size: 30 to 100 cm (max. 150 cm)

Red List of Slovenia: V – Vulnerable

Species status: Native (Danube), Introduced (Adriatic)

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