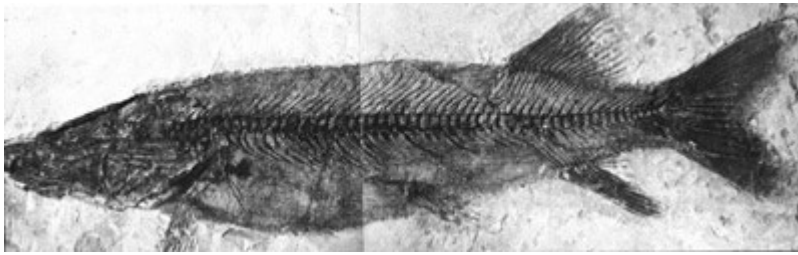


Pike Anglers Club of Great Britain



Pike ancient history



The pike (*Esox lucius*) has a distribution range that encompasses the entire northern hemisphere. Its southern range is limited by a preference for cooler water temperatures. In North America, where it exists alongside other members of the pike family it is popularly known as the northern pike. Probably the most widely known of these other American

pike is the muskellunge or musky (*E. masquinongy*). In most of Europe there is only the one species of pike, but in the watershed of the Amur River there exists a species restricted to that environment which is, unsurprisingly, called the Amur pike (*E. reicherti*).

Fossil evidence suggests that the modern pike has changed little in appearance from ancient pike, *E. lepidotus*, which existed around twenty million years ago. The earliest fossil example of *Esox lucius* to be found in Britain is around half a million years old.

From study of the fossil record it is believed that pike spread eastwards from a European starting point and that this explains the increasing variety of pike species the further east you look. The north American populations being the most easterly and the most varied.

It is also strongly suggested by archaeological evidence that the pike we know today is native to mainland Britain and has not been introduced in historical times. Pike bones have been found in association with harpoon heads dated around 9,500 years BC. Pike probably re-colonized what is now the UK through the land-river bridge that existed immediately after the last ice age when the ice sheet extended as far south as Essex.



Mankind has been inspired by the pike for centuries, as is evidenced by engravings of pike found in the Grotte of Gourdon on bones over seventeen thousand years old.

Images of pike are also to be found among the cave paintings of southern France which date back to the Stone Age. The association between hunters and pike is further enhanced by the discovery, at Molensaargraaf in the Rhine delta, of the remains of a boy who had choked on a pike bone, and who had been buried with a number of grave goods which included fish hooks.

Pike fishing has obviously been practiced for centuries!

We are indebted to Fred Buller for permission to use his classic book "*Pike*" as a source for the information on this page. H.L. Rolfe print courtesy of, and available from, Graphic Solutions

