

Yellow Perch in Onondaga Lake



- **Scientific Name:** *Perca flavescens*
- **Habitat:** The yellow perch is a schooling, shallow water fish. They are found in large lakes, small ponds, or gentle rivers but are most abundant in clear, weedy lakes that have muck, sand, or gravel bottoms.
- **Spawning Time:** Spring, in April and May.
- **Spawning Locations:** The eggs are usually deposited at night in sheltered areas two to ten feet of water over sand, gravel rubble or vegetation.
- **Age at Maturity:** Yellow Perch can reach sexual maturity at one year of age, but most reach maturity at ages two or three when they are about four to six inches long.
- **Spawning Behavior:** Yellow perch are random spawners, and do not construct nests; nor do they guard their eggs and their young. The gelatinous egg mass of yellow perch are laid in zigzag rows and draped over aquatic vegetation or submerged brush in water depths of two to ten feet deep. Egg masses are usually one or two inches wide and two to seven feet long. These egg masses sometimes break away and wash up on shore.
- **Number of Young Produced:** The number of eggs produced by female yellow perch is highly variable. Egg numbers range from 950 to 210,000 per female; egg diameters vary from 0.04 to 0.08 inches.
- **Larval Characteristics:** The hatching time of yellow perch eggs is highly variable ranging from 8 to 27 days, depending largely on water temperature. The larvae are 0.22 to 0.28 inches long upon hatching. They feed on plankton (tiny animals suspended in the water) for most of there life but will also feed on aquatic insects, fish eggs and small fish. Two year olds are about four to five inches long.
- **Life Span:** Yellow perch can live over ten years.
- **Size in Onondaga Lake:** Yellow perch in Onondaga Lake average about 6 to 8 inches long. Yellow perch over a foot long and weighing over a pound have been caught in the lake.