

SEX AND THE SINGLE MUSKIE

Ron Walker, the current release director of Muskies Canada has noted that many of our members are failing to sex their muskies. This important piece of data is not appearing on very many of our members research forms. An improvement is required. It seems that a bit of a review is in order for muskie fishermen, sex-ed class of 91.

In the past the only certain way to sex a muskellunge was through dissection and examination of the entrails. Research work carried out in Canada by Bernard LeBeau during the 1980's has established an external technique for sex determination on a muskellunge.

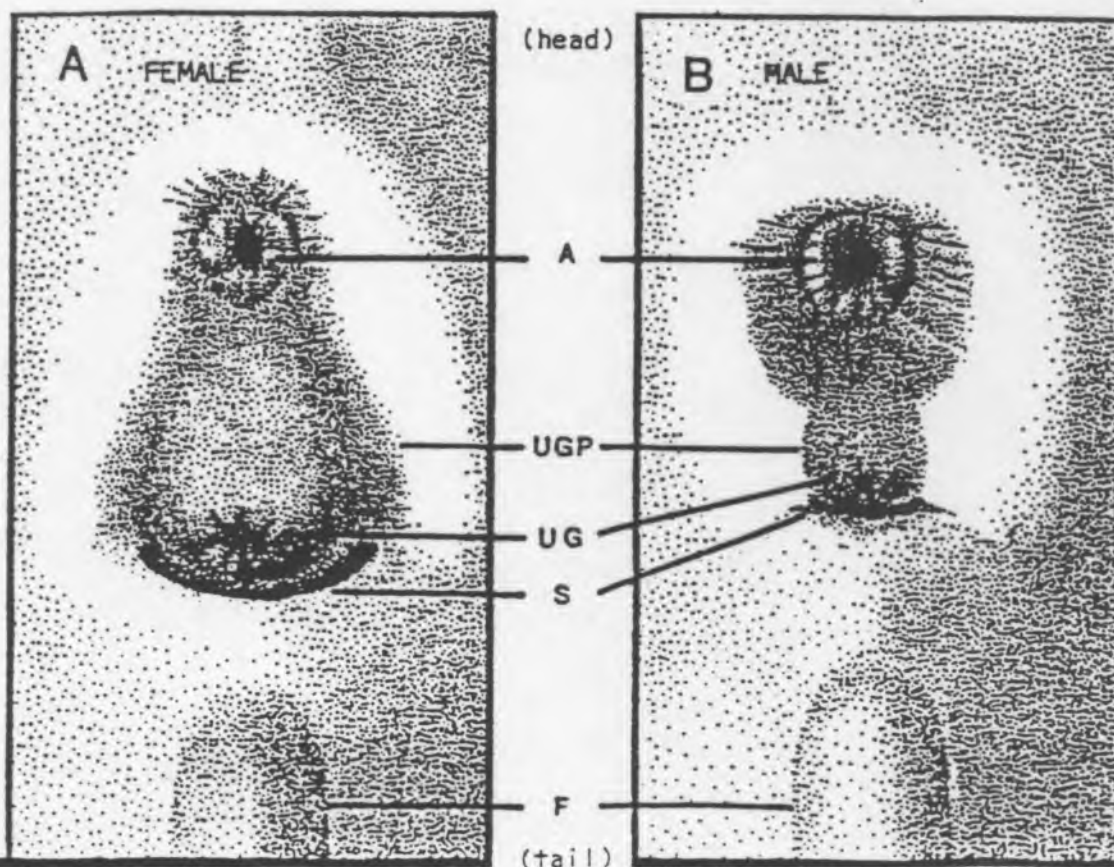
The sex of a legal sized muskie can be determined by quickly turning the muskie over on its back and inspecting the urogenital area located just in front of the anal fin on the underside of the fish. On a muskellunge the anal pore is situated towards the head while the urogenital pore lies closer to the tail. On an adult female muskellunge this tissue assembly can be roughly pear-shaped when looking from tail to head. On an adult male fish this same tissue assembly resembles a key-hole when viewed from tail to head. Examine the accompanying diagram for details (Diagram reproduced from the Release Form).

In any particular waterbody the breakdown of a fish population into a male/female component is an important piece of information for fisheries managers. This method of sexing muskellunge as developed by Bernard LeBeau not only allows us to provide M/F data but also permits live release of the lunge with minimal stress. The whole process is based on observation and is also very accurate. Let's make an effort during the upcoming season to build some experience with this classification method and provide better and more complete data on our catch and release forms.

Schematic diagrams of the urogenital regions of muskellunge.
A: Adult female. B: Adult male.

Key to diagram: A - anal pore; UGP - urogenital papilla; UG - urogenital pore; S - slit-like pit; F - anal fin.

The urogenital area is pear-shaped in females (A) with the slit-like pit curved or crescent-shaped. The area is key-hole shaped in males (B) with the slit-like pit more or less straight.



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