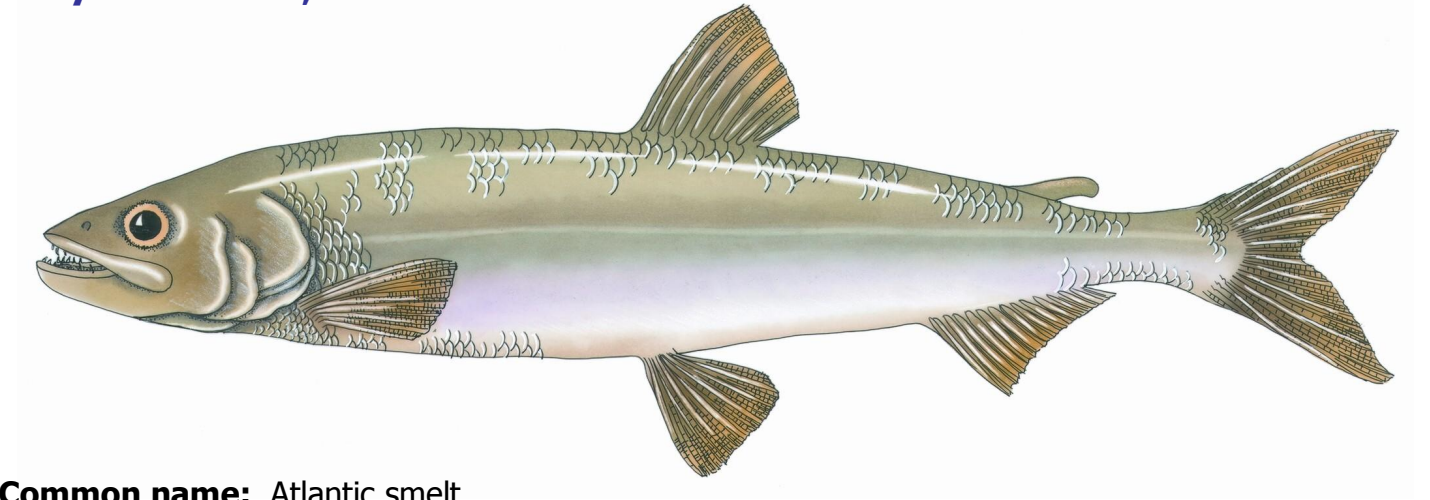


# Rainbow Smelt (Osmerus mordax)

## Family Osmeridae, Smelt



**Common name:** Atlantic smelt

**Description:** Rainbow smelt are mostly a dark blue green with bright silver sides. These fish possess a slender body with a pointed head and deeply forked tail fin. A small adipose fin is located between their single dorsal fin and tail fin. Their large mouth contains numerous teeth that they use to catch and hold their prey. Rainbow smelt rarely grow over 13 inches with the average adult measuring between 7 and 9 inches.

**Where found:** inshore and offshore

**Similar Gulf of Maine species:** capelin

**Remarks:** In Maine, rainbow smelt are a prized food fish that are harvested in three distinct fisheries. During the spring months, as these anadromous fish move into their natal streams to spawn, fishermen use dip nets to capture them. The fall season supports a riverine and coastal bay hook and line fishery. A lightweight spinning rod and reel is considered the equipment of choice for smelt. Common baits used are mummichogs, marine worms and clams. In winter, anglers fish for smelt through the ice. The most popular baits used in this fishery are marine worms. To protect themselves from the winter cold, fishermen frequently fish from shanties or shacks. This latter manner of fishing has proven to be very popular on many of the state's tidal rivers and saltwater bays.

**Records:** MSSAR  
IGFA All-Tackle World Record

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