

One of the Ugliest Fish, the Burbot, May Not Please the Eye But it's Excellent Table Fare

By R. E. ANDREWS

If a fish ever was maligned for its looks, then the burbot can take top honors. The external features of burbot are quite unattractive, and have been responsible for the prejudices against him. However, behind this facade of homely looks is a valuable food and recreational fish.

Burbot bite readily on baits of all kinds and are becoming very popular to South-Central Alaska winter ice-fishing enthusiasts because of this fact. Not to be overlooked is that burbot are excellent table fare.

The burbot has the distinction of being the sole representative of the codfish family in freshwater. All its relatives prefer to live in marine waters.

Burbot are known by a variety of names, and are commonly called ling, lawyer, freshwater cusk, and eelpout. The scientific name is *Lota lota*, from the Old French "Lotte" which is equivalent in English to "pout."

There are two features by which burbot may be distinguished from other freshwater fishes of Alaska; on the underside of the chin near the tip is located a single,

prominent barbel, or "chin whisker," and the presence of two dorsal fins. Dorsal fins are the fins occurring along the back of a fish.

Burbot inhabit streams and deep lakes and spawn in late winter or in early spring. In Southcentral Alaska the spawning season may range from February to April, and takes place under the ice.

Some of the large lakes in the Glennallen area, such as Crosswind, Lake Louise, Lake Tyone, and Lake Susitna—to mention a few—boast man-sized burbot.

A burbot recently caught from this area topped out at 17 pounds, 10 ounces, and was 42 inches long..... big enough to provide an Alaskan

sized fish fry for the largest family.

Fishing regulations for burbot are liberal in Southcentral Alaska. There is no bag or size limit, and up to 15 lines and hooks can be used per angler.

Bait the hooks with chunks of cut fish or any kind of meat. Although burbot may be found at practically all depths, it usually pays off to fish waters 15 feet or less, in weedy bays and inlets.