

# How old is the walleye I caught in Charlie Lake?

The only reliable way to determine the age of a walleye, or any other fish species, is to examine one of the many suitable body parts. Scales have been used traditionally and can be reasonably accurate for some species in certain environments, such as fast-growing fish in warm waters. For most species in northern latitudes it is preferable to use bony structures or fin rays. One of the preferred structures is the otolith, which is a tiny bone located in the inner ear. Growth annuli, much like tree rings, are interpreted to assess the age of the fish.

In Charlie Lake walleye appear to reach a maximum fork length of approximately 40 cm. around age 8, beyond which they grow very little. Each of the small dots in the graph below indicates the length and age of each single walleye in a sample, and it also shows a large variation in length for each age. For example, walleye at age 4 vary in length from about 20 to 35 cm. The larger dots along the curved line indicate the predicted length at each age. The yellow band shows that walleye 40 cm. and larger can be as young as 5 and as old as 19 years of age.

