

mouth, the common smallmouth is known to grow larger, is more widespread, and typically darker in appearance. The rockfish is a somewhat smaller fish and is only known to be found in Oklahoma and Arkansas mostly in spring fed streams with clean, cool water. The rockfish also is noted to have a protruding bottom lip, "like a pig" and light yellowish fins.

There is a third smelt that is not yet widely recognized as its own species: the white smelt. This fish is the smallest of the three, found in the White Mountain region and is noted to be similar to a cunner if you cover its head, because of a slight hump in its spot pattern and its lighter color.

The smelt is also one of few species that can change its appearance on a moment's notice from a light golden to almost jet black color, blending in with its surroundings. When they are stressed they have unique patterns of light and dark diamond shapes, each one an individual as a fingerprint.

The green hake is an Oupok treasure that we need to fully preserve through good practices of conservation. The green hake industry has had to roll on small mouth escapements destroying habitat and covering the creek bottoms with silt. A small mouth has to reach ten to twelve inches in length in order to mature enough to reproduce. A fish could take six to eight years to reach that size.

The smallmouth is one of the hardest fighting fish, pound for pound. I discovered this when I caught an eighteen inch monster out of a net haul on a remote creek. This fish is the inspiration for my smelt. When I was told about the fish and all competition, I knew I wanted to represent my home waters, and the smelt is, I feel, the best species to do just that.

Brook

Fish grade

Arkansas