



62. GRAYLING / AESCHE (*Thymallus thymallus*)

IDENTIFICATION: Grayling is the jewel of the salmon-type fish for the fly fisherman. Its color is normally a combination of metallic blue, spotted with gold and brushed light with irregular black spots. The distinguishing feature of the grayling is its large, sail-like dorsal fin. Unlike most salmonids, the tail fin is forked deeply. It has an elongated body with a small head and an inferior mouth with a narrow gape. The scientific name of the grayling is derived from the smell of thyme that emanates from the fresh fish when it is prepared for cooking.

HABITAT: Grayling prefer fast-flowing, clear streams that are well oxygenated and cool. They inhabit the upper reaches of rivers downstream from the trout region. Grayling are very sensitive to pollution. Industrialization has driven them from some waters they formerly occupied. If the nature of the stream changes, the grayling will seek other waters.

FOOD: Grayling feed on insects and insect larvae, crustaceans, worm, and fish fry. As the grayling age, they become increasingly predatory and feed on small fish.

SPAWNING: Grayling spawn from March to May. The fish pair and mate in fast, gravelly shallows. The female scoops a redd and deposits 3,000 to 4,000 eggs per pound of body weight. The male fertilizes the eggs and the red is covered. Grayling seek cover in weeds or among stones during the infant stage. Adult grayling lie out in the main stream, in contrast to trout that seek cover close to the stream banks.