

About Trout

Rainbow Trout

(*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

Other Names: bows or freshwater salmon

Average size: 2-4 lbs, up to 8 lbs

Spring spawner



Illustration by Joseph Tomelleri

Rainbow Trout are actually a land-locked form of the anadromous Steelhead. Their diet consists of eating such things as minnows, crayfish, insects, and other small aquatic life.

Rainbow Trout get their name from the reddish stripe along their sides, but not all Rainbow Trout have really bright red stripes. Mature males who are ready to spawn have the most pronounced red striping while the females are much less dramatic in coloration. The rest of the fish body is usually silvery, darker on top and lighter on bottom for camouflage (if they are dark on top, they are hard to see against the dark back ground of the bottom of the stream, and their light undersides make them hard to see from the bottom looking up because they are hard to see against the light of the sun and sky) with black spots along the back.

Rainbows actually prefer cold, clear, swift-moving water to live in, but they can survive in fairly warm water as well if they can get enough oxygen. They are found most often in water 55-60 degrees Fahrenheit, but can tolerate temperatures up to 75 degrees.

To spawn, Rainbows return to the stream where they were born (they can find it by SMELLING it!!). Here, the female makes a nest called a "redd" by scooping out the gravel with her tail (she doesn't actually use her tail as a shovel in the gravel, but she pumps it so hard that the water forces the gravel to move so that a hole is soon made). Then she lays her eggs in her redd and a male fish fertilizes them.