

Rainbow trout

Oncorhynchus mykiss



Rainbow trout occur in several major waters on the Central Plateau. Great Lake, Lake St Clair and Lake Echo have self recruiting populations. Other waters such as Penstock Lagoon rely on stocking. The Weld rivers in the North and South of the state, Mersey and the Vale rivers also have natural recruitment. Many other waters are stocked with rainbow trout.

Description: A long, thick-bodied fish. They have a dorsal fin high on their backs with a small fleshy fin near the tail called an adipose fin.

Colour: The colour is variable, but often has a rosy, pink flush along the sides and on the gill cover. Lake populations are generally silvery, with a dark green back and many small spots. Breeding fish tend to be more intensely coloured, as do those fish found in rivers.

Size: Can reach weights of over 20 kg and over 1120 mm in length. The record for the biggest fish caught in Australia is a 7.8 kg fish caught in the River Ouse, Tasmania.

Habitat: Requires cool well oxygenated water. Newly emerged fry school along stream edges or backwaters. Often feeds in open water. They also seem to be attracted to inflowing water.

Diet: They feed on a wide variety of animals including crustaceans, molluscs, aquatic and terrestrial insects and small fishes.

Life Cycle: Spawning occurs during Spring when fish migrate upstream to gravel-bottom stretches of river. Fish pair up with eggs and milt deposited into a depression prepared by the female called a redd. These are then covered up by dislodging upstream gravel. The eggs hatch after four to seven weeks, depending on water temperature. Hatchlings stay in the gravel feeding off their yolk-sacs until they emerge as fry and disperse.

Distribution status: Introduced in 1898.

Original range: Native to the drainages in North Pacific Ocean. Their natural range is the West Coast of North America, from California to Alaska. On the other side of the Pacific from Kamchatka Peninsula in Russia, east along the Aleutian Islands. Stocked worldwide for angling and aquaculture.

Reasons for change to distribution: Low flows prior to the fry emerging from the gravel nests; Loss of instream habitat; Erosion leading to increased sedimentation; Overfishing.

Legal status: Angling.

Can it be taken? An inland recreational Angling Licence is needed to take rainbow trout. Bag, size limits and fishing technique (bait, lure or fly) may vary between waters.

Other names: N/A.



Illustration Krystii Melaine

BL12080