

North Carolina Sport Fish Profiles



Rainbow trout

Scientific Name:

Oncorhynchus mykiss

Identification:

The rainbow trout is named for the broad, lateral stripe on its sides, which ranges from pink to red. Its back is olive-green, and its belly is whitish with heavy black speckling on all fins and the entire body.



Illustration by Duane Raver

Habitats and Habits:

Rainbow trout are native to the Pacific drainages of western North America but have been introduced throughout mountain streams in North Carolina. As with other trout, rainbows inhabit streams, rivers, ponds and lakes with good water quality and temperatures that rarely exceed 70 F. They have a tendency to hang out in faster currents, such as riffles and swift runs, more so than brook or brown trout. Spawning occurs primarily in late winter.

Young rainbow trout feed on small aquatic and terrestrial insects. Adults eat a wide variety of aquatic and terrestrial insects, as well as crustaceans, fish and other small vertebrates.

Fishing Techniques:

Fishing dry flies, streamers, and nymphs that imitate natural foods works well. This method is especially popular in North Carolina's many streams that support wild trout. Fishing baits, such as worms and corn, are highly effective for catching hatchery-reared rainbow trout. Spin casting small spinners, spoons and crankbaits can be productive as well. Be sure to check the current trout fishing regulations on the type of lures allowed as well as the size limit and creel limit for a particular trout water before fishing.

Good Places to Fish:

Check out the North Carolina Trout Maps (http://www.ncwildlife.org/Fishing/Fish_Maps_Location.htm#trout) to find trout fishing opportunities listed by counties.

Other Information:

NCARP Minimum Requirements: Hatchery raised: 2 lbs., 8 oz. or 18 inches. Wild trout: 12 ounces or 12 inches.

State Record: 20 lbs., 3 oz., from Jackson County, January 28, 2006

World Record: 42 lbs., 2 oz., from Bell Island, Alaska, June 22, 1970*

** Anglers provide information on their potential world-record catches directly to the International Game Fish Association, which maintains the world records for sport fishing.*