

- ◆ 11 native species including 3 sport fish: cutthroat trout (3 subspecies), fluvial Arctic grayling, and mountain whitefish.
- ◆ 5 non-native species: brook trout, brown trout, lake trout, rainbow trout, lake chub.
- ◆ More than 220 lakes comprise approximately 107,000 surface acres in Yellowstone; 94 percent can be attributed to Yellowstone, Shoshone, Lewis, and Heart lakes.
- ◆ 1,000 streams make up more than 2,650 miles of running water.
- ◆ Cutthroat trout are a primary food for bald eagles, ospreys, pelicans, otters, and grizzly bears.

History of Fisheries Management

When Yellowstone became a national park, more than 40 percent of its waters were barren of fish—including Shoshone Lake, Lewis Lake, and the Firehole River above Firehole Falls. Early park managers transplanted fish into new locations, produced more fish in hatcheries, and introduced non-native species. By the mid-20th century, more than 310 million fish had been stocked in the park. Stocking no longer occurs. About 40 lakes have fish; the remainder were either not stocked or have reverted to their original fishless condition.

Native Fish

The ranges and densities of the park's native fish species have been substantially altered during the past century due to exploitation, introduction of exotic species, and natural

factors. Large-scale habitat degradation—such as water diversions or water pollution—has not occurred in the park.

The Impact of Non-Native Trout

Non-native trout are important to the angler experience in Yellowstone, but they contribute to the decline in the park's native cutthroat trout and fluvial Arctic grayling by competing for food and habitat, preying on native fish, and degrading the genetic integrity of native fish by mating with them and creating hybrids.

Maintaining Native Fish Genetics

Non-native rainbow trout also interbreed with native cutthroat trout, producing hybrids. Once this happens, a cutthroat population can be restored to genetic purity only if all fish are removed from a stream and genetically pure cutthroat are reintroduced. To reduce hybridization in the park's cutthroat trout waters, anglers are encouraged to harvest rainbow trout.

Maintaining the Park's Ecological Integrity

In Yellowstone, bald eagles, ospreys, pelicans, otters, grizzly bears, and other wildlife take precedence over humans in utilizing fish as food. Fish management and regulations reflect this priority. For example, some waters are closed to fishing to protect threatened and endangered species, and sensitive nesting birds. Regulations ban lead tackle because the lead concentrates in aquatic environments, posing a risk of lead poisoning to waterfowl that might ingest it. Only non-toxic alternatives to lead are allowed. (See page 6 for one exception.)

How many anglers come to Yellowstone each year?

About 50,000 of the park's three million visitors fish while they are in Yellowstone.

Why can't we fish from Fishing Bridge?

Fishing Bridge, situated over a cutthroat trout spawning area, was once a popular place to fish (photo). Declining numbers of cutthroat trout caused park officials to close the bridge to fishing to protect the spawning fish. Now the bridge is a popular place to observe and photograph fish.

Why are barbless hooks required?

Many fish have been injured or deformed by barbed hooks, especially in the park's popular streams, such as the Yellowstone River and Soda Butte Creek. Barbless hooks reduce hook injuries and the time you need to handle the fish, and improve the overall condition of trout in heavily-fished waters of the park.

Why is fishing lead-free in Yellowstone?

Lead is a severe environmental contaminant and a toxic substance that has no known beneficial biological function. Wildlife, such as loons, waterfowl, cranes, and shorebirds, are vulnerable to lead poisoning. Of particular concern in Yellowstone are the alarmingly low populations of trumpeter swans and loons. To minimize the effects of lead on these species, Yellowstone National Park bans most lead tackle. (Lead core line and heavy [> 4 lb.]

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downrigger weights used to fish for deep-dwelling lake trout are permissible because they are too large to be ingested by wildlife.)

How do anglers help Yellowstone?

Fly fishing is a major industry in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, and park anglers spend millions here annually. Angler groups have supported management actions, such as catch-and-release of native species and closing the Fishing Bridge to fishing, and have helped fund research on aquatic systems. In addition, anglers help by:

- ◆ correctly identifying fish and selectively removing non-native trout in waters where they are causing harm (such as the upper meadows of Slough Creek)
- ◆ removing lake trout, a non-native fish that preys on an important population of Yellowstone cutthroat trout in Yellowstone Lake
- ◆ taking actions to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (see pages 4–5)
- ◆ filling out and returning the Volunteer Angler Report card (see page 15)

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