

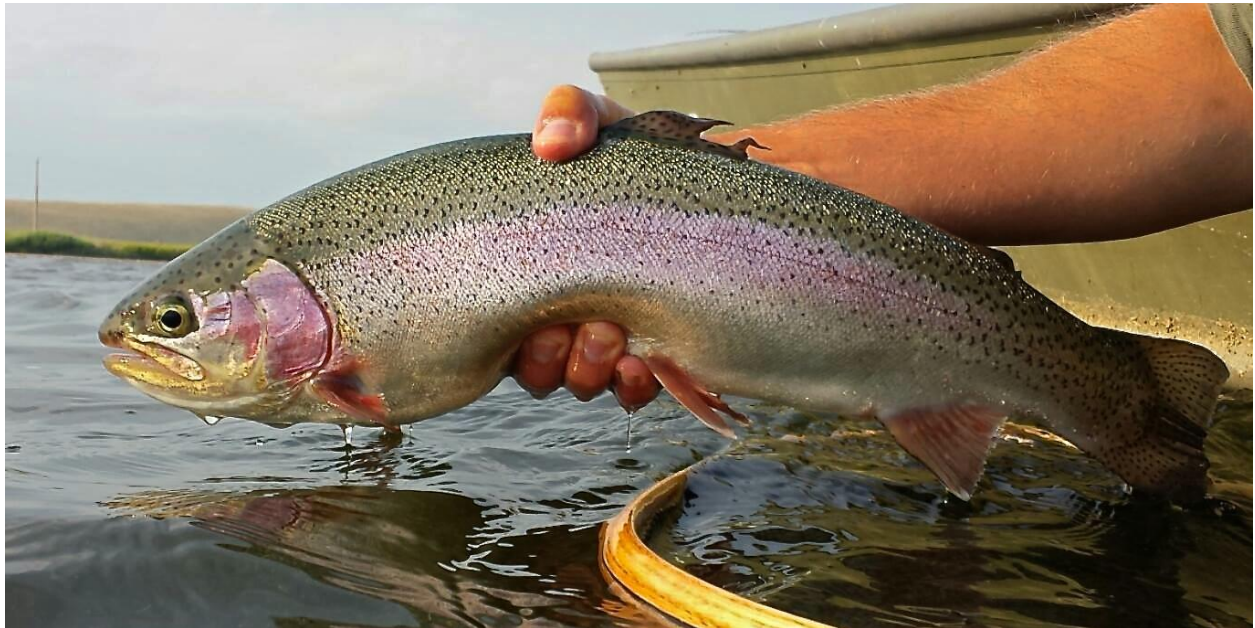
Muddling Along Dec 13

Strains of Rainbow Trout Used in Stocking Lakes in B.C. (Part 2)

In Part 1, I gave an overview of trout stocking in B.C. and had a look at the various strains that have been used historically. There were up to a dozen or so different strains that have been used over the year for stocking, but this has been reduced to four strains (Fraser Valley, Gerrard, Pennask and Blackwater) with some work on developing a fifth strain from Carp Lake north of Prince George. I would like to look at each of these strains and explore where they are located and what their habits are and how that would affect our fishing methods.

Fraser Valley strain

As mentioned in part 1, Fraser Valley fish originated from the Trout Lodge Hatchery in Washington State. They were selectively bred to produce a very fast growing fish mostly to use for “put and take” fisheries in small productive lakes near urban areas. Most of these stocked fish are AF3N (all female, triploid—I will say more about this term in a later part) and as such will not reproduce, so do not develop the pre-spawning and spawning behaviours and degradation of flesh quality that wild fish develop as they reproduce.



As can be seen from the picture above, Fraser Valley fish tend to be heavily spotted, above and below the lateral line and on the tail, and very stocky compared to other trout. They can be put into a productive lake as 10 to 12 inch “catchables” and by October can reach lengths of up to 18 inches and weights of over a kilogram (over 2 pounds)!

These fish very seldom jump when hooked, but can put up a good struggle on a light rod. In my experience, they come to the net much more easily than other strains of trout.

Fraser Valleys are quite aggressive and not too shy of predators (they look on human supplied pellets as a food source!) Although raised on a diet of fish pellets, they quickly adopt a typical insectivorous diet like that of the Pennask strain. When first released, they can be caught on just about any fly with a bit of flash in it and fished on an intermediate sink line but as they adapt to the food sources of the lake, they can be caught on a range of flies including chironomids, leech patterns, nymphs representing the common insects of B.C. lakes (dragons, damsels, mayflies, caddis) as well as adult insects. When insects are hatching out at the water surface, they will feed aggressively on dry flies in sizes and colours to match the hatch. A Tom Thumb in grays, browns and greens in various sizes will work quite well but any other patterns (Parachute Adams, Elk Hair Caddis, Mikaluk Sedge to name a few) which match the colour and size of the hatch will work well at times.

FV rainbows are stocked mostly in lakes which are accessible to large numbers of anglers and generally will be caught mostly as 10 to 12 inch fish, although a few will survive to attain larger sizes. They are also used to stock productive lakes which are prone to "winter kill" because of poor water circulation after freeze up. Campbellmeyer Lake near Cranbrook produces trout in the 18 inch range by October.

On Vancouver Island, you will find them stocked in most lakes near major centres unless the lakes have large populations of competing fish or native fish (e.g. Brannen Lake and Quennell Lake both are stocked with Blackwater strain fish.

In some cases, the local Hatchery will release brood stock fish into small lakes to provide a chance for anglers to catch a large fish. Fish up to 3 kg (about 7 lbs) have been released in small numbers (less than 100) into Divers, Chemainus and Fuller Lakes. Unfortunately, these fish released in late fall and early spring develop their typical spawning colours and behaviour about mid spring and don't feed actively from that point on.