

Muddling Along November 29, 2015

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PENNASK RAINBOW (PREMIER LAKE)

Strains of Rainbow Trout Used in Stocking Lakes in B.C. (Part 1)

I have had numerous questions from club members about strains of rainbow trout found in various parts of B.C. I have been curious myself so have done a little bit of sleuthing on the web and in my fly fishing books and have come up with some information of interest (to me anyway!)

All native trout in B.C. have been re-established since the last Ice Age ended about 10 000 years ago. There were three glacial free areas which maintained trout populations during glaciations and the trout migrated from these “glacial refugia” over a period of thousands of years. In the southern part of B.C. trout moved from a coastal area and an interior area in the glacier free south, to provide two distinct populations of interior and coastal rainbows. In northern B.C., all trout originated from an area near the Queen Charlottes and moved into coastal and interior waters. Over time, these populations of trout evolved and adapted to the conditions in various lakes to produce many distinct strains of rainbows.

Starting as early as 1915 at Premier Lake near Cranbrook, there have been stocking programs going on using strains of trout from a number of different water bodies. Strains of trout used have included Pennask Lake (north of the Peachland/Merrit connector), Blackwater River (tributary of the Fraser north of Quesnel), Tzenzaicut Lake (southwest of Quesnel, not far from the Fraser River), Gerrard (from Kootenay Lake), Tunkwa Lake (southwest of Kamloops)(these fish are “native” to Tunkwa, from earlier stockings), Premier Lake (“native” to Premier from stocking of wild fish before Pennask strain fish were introduced), Dragon Lake (“native” to Dragon Lake from stocking of wild fish before Blackwater and Tzenzaicut strain trout were introduced), Badger Lake (up the North Thompson, East of McLure) and Green Lake (east of Highway 97 not far from 70 Mile House) and Fraser Valley Domestic, a captive strain developed from broodstock from McCleary strain trout at the Trout Lodge Hatchery in Washington state.

The strains of trout mentioned above were captured for egg take and the resultant fry used to stock lakes in a number of different areas in the province. As well as using the original water bodies for egg take, other lakes were used as brood stock lakes to provide a more widespread source for fish for stocking. Pennask fish are raised in Premier, Beaver and Kostal lakes. Blackwater strain is hosted in Dragon Lake and Genier Lake (Genier was terminated in 2000), Tzenzaicut were raised in Dragon Lake and Tunkwa Lake (both of these programs have been terminated), Gerrard are raised from eggs taken from captive Gerrards (in hatchery) and new stock is added every few years from eggs taken from wild trout in the Lardeau River, Fraser Valley trout are raised exclusively in hatcheries (Duncan has the nearest one to us), Green Lake program was terminated in 1991, Badger Lake stock was raised in Tunkwa lake until 1999 then terminated.

At the time of this writing, the majority of B.C. stocked rainbow are Pennask strain (in lakes with no other fish competition), Blackwater strain (in lakes with coarse fish or other trout strains. Blackwaters are not usually stocked in lakes where there are Pennask fish but Premier Lake is an exception to that. Premier is now used as a brood lake for both strains (started in 2012 according to my sources, but I haven't seen that confirmed in Fresh Water Fisheries Society information.

In future installments , I want to explore further these different races of rainbow trout and make some suggestions as to how this might influence our choice of lakes to fish, where to fish in the lakes and flies and techniques to us when fishing.