

GREENBACK CUTTHROAT TROUT

Oncorhynchus clarki stomias (Threatened Colorado, Federally)

Greenback cutthroat trout are distinguished from Colorado River cutthroats by their larger, but fewer, spots.



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GREENBACK CUTTHROAT trout are cold-water fish belonging to the trout, salmon and whitefish family. They have dark, round spots on the sides and tail and two colorful blood-red stripes on each side of the throat under the jaw, hence the name "cutthroat." During the spring spawning season the entire belly may become crimson red.

Greenbacks prefer cold, clear, gravelly headwater streams and mountain lakes, which provide an abundant food supply of insects. They originally lived in the mountain and foothill areas of the Arkansas and South Platte River systems in Colorado and part of Wyoming. Today, greenback cutthroat trout persist in about 5 percent of their original habitat. Their numbers began to decline due to over-fishing, stocking of rainbow, brook, brown and Yellowstone cutthroat trout in their habitat, and loss of high-quality trout stream habitat due to logging, live-stock over-grazing, water diversions and

municipal and industrial pollution.

A cooperative recovery effort between the Division of Wildlife, U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Rocky Mountain National Park was initiated for the greenback cutthroat trout. This Recovery Team and university researchers and interested conservation groups like Colorado Trout Unlimited continue to conduct systematic searches for existing populations, identification of suitable reintroduction sites, stream improvement projects and a hatchery-based restoration stocking program. Adult and juvenile greenbacks have been stocked into alpine and montane lakes and streams in the South Platte and Arkansas River basins since the late 1960s. Many of the historic and restored populations are located in Rocky Mountain National Park. Presently, greenback cutthroat trout occur in 66 lakes and streams and 37 of these are expected to meet the population criteria required for recovery.