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Subject: : Stream Reports

Topic: : Elk Creek, Erie County PA 12/5/2009

Re: Elk Creek, Erie County PA 12/5/2009

Author: : pcray1231

Date: : 2009/12/23 8:48:55

URL:

Quote:

you make a fatal error and call these fish steelhead... they aren't the are lake run rainbows

They are both, as all steelhead are technically lake or ocean run rainbows, but they are indeed steelhead. Steelhead are a subspecies of rainbow trout and originate on the west coast, and each drainage evolved a different "strain".

PA steelhead originate from a weird mix of steelhead strains and are often termed a mutt, but they are true steelhead. We grew fish reared from eggs obtained from Washington State, as well as Michigan's Little Manistee (which originated in the McCloud River, CA) strain. I believe there is some influence from Skamania, Jacob's Creek, and London strains too. The London strain is from Ohio and could truly be called a domesticated rainbow, not a steelhead. So our fish are 90% a mix of various strains of true steelhead, and 10% domesticated rainbow. The mixing of the "true" strains was to increase return rates as well as spread out the run over the course of the season. Steelhead eggs are gathered from returning steelhead, and the system runs totally independent of the rest of our stocking system.

As far as inbreeding, the PA "mutt" strain is more genetically diverse than any natural population of trout found ANYWHERE. Genetic ancestry determines the time of the run. PA steelhead run anytime from late August through early May, which is the longest time frame I know of and reflects the genetic diversity. Eggs are collected throughout the whole year to maintain that diversity. And the migratory nature of steelhead makes them less inbred than say, you're average wild brown trout stream.

3-C-U also stocks a large number of steelhead. Obviously their genetics are strongly influenced by the fish commission. At least early in their operation, they seined WILD smolts as their brood stock. I don't know how they do it now.

I should note that our wild brown trout are also "mutts", a strain not native anywhere in the world, but rather a mix of natural strains that have adapted well.

Quote:

this time of year??? we are just a few days from full freeze  
the water is in the mid 30s  
where are these fish moving??? they are already in upper elk

Fish actively move until full blown ice-up (not just slush or shelf ice, we're talking dams of ice). They'll move again as soon as the streams thaw enough to allow passage. In years where the ice doesn't get severe enough to stop upstream migration, it doesn't stop for winter. Fish not only feed in 33 degree water, they've been recorded trying to breed in it. I've literally seen fish actively moving up through riffles with slush flowing over their backs.

At any given time throughout the year, you have active fish which are moving up, temporarily resting fish, and fallback fish (which will later make another push). These fish never settle down into long-term "holding" areas, and instead are looking to move all of the time.

There are miles of water, and several tributaries, above Foley's. I consider it to be middle Elk. These fish basically move upstream until there's no more room to do so, and even then, they keep trying.

I can't speak for this situation as I was not present, but they get into shallow water all on their own. While they will get into cover on occasion, as well as feeding lies. But the primary factor in location is not cover or feeding, but rather migration. This is why they differ from "regular" trout.