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Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum

Topic: : Big Spring Rainbows being killed

Re: Big Spring Rainbows being killed

Author: : Fishidiot

Date: : 2013/10/1 17:12:35

URL:

Quote:

The\_Sasquatch wrote:

I highly doubt any of those brookies are related to the original native strains that were there. These are the descendents of hatchery fish, same as the wild bows, correct?

Probably.

The hatchery bows are definitely of recent stocky genetics and this can be seen in their propensity to spawn in the fall. Whether the brookies are a "heritage" strain or otherwise unique is, of course, much more complicated. The claim is often made that the wild brook trout in BS were wiped out in the mid 20th century, but this is not the case (although they declined greatly). Wild brook trout have persisted in the upper ("ditch") section through the years. Stocked brook trout, both adult and fingerling, have been added to the stream over the decades too and this has likely diluted the genetics. I suspect, however, that some unique genetics may remain since the current wild brook trout in BS are *winter spawners*. This is highly unusual. I don't know anywhere else in PA where brook trout spawn in the Dec-Feb time frame. The fact that BS brookies spawn in winter has been documented for decades. This suggests to me that the current wild fish may have some unique characteristics and may be related to the ones present decades ago. There are tissue samples from decades old brookies from the Cumberland Valley watershed and - as Tomi pointed out - there is a current genetic study underway to compare current BS brooks with this genetic population. Results should be interesting. My guess will be that the results will show a mixed heritage. My personal view is that the genetic strain of brook trout is not an especially critical issue with respect to management decisions....however, I recognize the point that other folks feel that unique strains deserve special protections.

On a separate note - but related to the spawning season issue: I have not seen the level of rainbow spawning the last month as I expected to see, and that I've seen the last couple years. Brookies, on the other hand, were spawning heavily at the beginning of this year, the most I've ever seen. I don't claim this as even remotely scientific.....but it seems to me that the 2013 YOY class may possibly see better brookie reproduction and fewer bows. Time will tell. The stream was not surveyed this year, but will be in the future and population trends will continue to be monitored. I haven't been up at BS as much this year as I'd like - if you've been watching the spawning picture, I'd be curious to hear what you have seen with respect to spawning.