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Subject: : Paflyfish General Forum

Topic: : "wild" rainbows

Re: "wild" rainbows

Author: : troutbert

Date: : 2009/6/24 18:10:30

URL:

Quote:

pcray1231 wrote:

Troutbert,

Water temperature was a problem with the clearcuts, but not the main problem. Siltation was the main problem, as well as a very quick change in soil type (leading to old springs drying up and new, different ones forming). Even today, many of the small streams have relatively little suitable spawning habitat. All the spawning occurs in relatively small areas, and then the fry spread back out afterwards. (this all goes back to populations, not fish, being "fragile").

With the deforestation, there would have been a rapid change in the streams, and spawning areas would have been silted in. I'm not saying no populations held on, but it would have been tough. Logging then was very different than today. Today we do small clearcuts or selective logging. Then they did wholesale clearing of many square miles.

By the time the area regrows into grasses and brush, the siltation would have been slowly washing out, forming new structure, and allowing for possible repopulation.

Like you said, it wasn't all at the same time, some regions took longer to get to than others, and maybe while the Pine Creek drainage was being devastated, several other drainages farther south along the Susquehanna were well on their way to recovery. Those drainages are connected and fish do have the ability to swim, and have always shown the ability to repopulate good habitat against all odds. While I don't dismiss the possibility of an isolated, remnant "pure" population, I do think it's likely we have significant natural genes in our fish, whether mixed or not.

Interesting theories about why brook trout "should have" been eradicated. But I have never seen historical evidence that they actually were. At what time interval were the brookies supposedly nearly entirely missing?

I've read a lot of historical accounts of PA brook trout fishing. There are many complaints of the fishing being down, but I've never come across any accounts that suggested that it disappeared altogether, or even came close.

Vanishing Trout, by Charles Lose, is interesting on these accounts. It was published in 1931. He complains

about the reduction in quality of the fishing. But he also talks about catching brook trout in old splash dams from the logging era, and fishing streams flanked by stripped hillsides. He was old when he wrote that book and fished many of these areas before they were logged, and after. He does not say anywhere in the book that there was a period when the brookies were wiped out.

Regarding siltation and spawning habitat etc. The freestone streams in NC PA generally are of high to medium gradient. So they are high energy streams. Fine sediment does not stay around long in these type of streams. With high flows, it gets carried downstream. Walk along these streams and notice what substrate the streambeds are made up of. There are predominately cobble, which means rocks 4 to 10 inches in diameter. There is little silt and not even much sand. Those fine materials get quickly carried downstream in high flow.

In many places even gravel, which is the size preferred for spawning, is in short supply, because high energy flows carry it away.

And many sections are running on flat bedrock, where the stream energy is so high that even cobble and small boulders get swept away.