

Fishing Regulations

Yellowstone
National Park

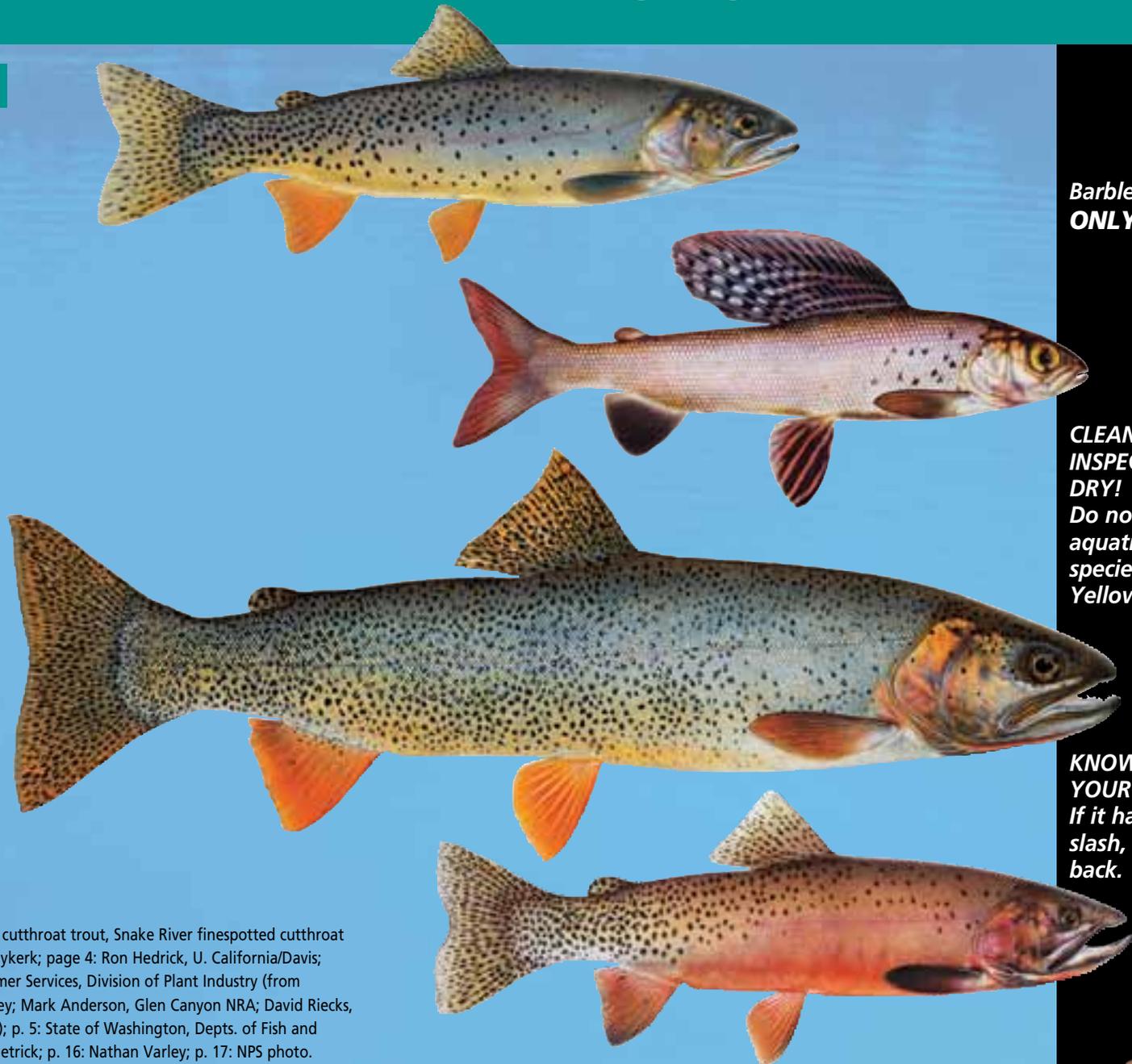
For More Information

If you have questions about information in this guide, please contact:

Visitor Services Office
P.O. Box 168
Yellowstone National Park, WY 82190
307-344-2107

For more information about Yellowstone fisheries, go to:
www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/fishing.htm

www.greateryellowstonescience.org



**Barbless hook
ONLY**

**CLEAN!
INSPECT!
DRY!**
*Do not bring
aquatic invasive
species into
Yellowstone.*

**KNOW
YOUR FISH**
*If it has a red
slash, put it
back.*

Covers: Joe Tomelleri (Arctic grayling, Yellowstone cutthroat trout, Snake River finespotted cutthroat trout, westslope cutthroat trout); page 3: Sandra Nykerk; page 4: Ron Hedrick, U. California/Davis; Dan Gustafson; Fl. Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry (from USGS website); Ted Snider, III. Natural History Survey; Mark Anderson, Glen Canyon NRA; David Riecks, U. Illinois/Urbana-Champaign (from SGNIS website); p. 5: State of Washington, Depts. of Fish and Wildlife, and Ecology; p. 7: Todd Koel; p. 14: Jeff Hetrick; p. 16: Nathan Varley; p. 17: NPS photo. All illustrations and photos listed here © by originator except NPS photo, which is public domain.



How to Use These Regulations

1. Familiarize yourself with the GENERAL REGULATIONS, listed on pages 6–7. They include permit requirements for fishing, boats, and float tubes; tackle & bait restrictions; and size or possession limits.
2. See the map on pages 8–10 to determine WHICH OF THE TWO MANAGEMENT AREAS WITHIN THE PARK—the Native Trout Conservation Area or the Wild Trout Enhancement Area—you will be in.
3. Read the POSSESSION LIMITS BY MANAGEMENT AREA on page 8 to determine the allowed harvest. Catch-and-release is mandatory for cutthroat trout and all other native species in both management areas.
4. Check if the stream or lake you will be fishing is listed on page 10 in the EXCEPTIONS TO GENERAL REGULATIONS.

Stay Safe & Legal

You are responsible for following all park regulations. Consult *Yellowstone Today*, *Backcountry Trip Planner*, or rangers at visitor centers and backcountry offices.

- ◆ Stay on established trails in thermal areas for your safety and to protect these fragile areas.
- ◆ Stay at least 100 yards from bears and wolves, and 25 yards from all other animals.
- ◆ Know how to avoid bears and what to do if you encounter a bear.
- ◆ Carry bear pepper spray and know how to use it.
- ◆ Do not feed any animals, including birds.

www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/fishing.htm
[publications.htm](#)

Help preserve Yellowstone for the future.

Contents

Aquatic Invasive Species	4–5
General Regulations, Fishing & Boating	6–7
Illegal Actions & Reporting Violations	7
Angler Etiquette	7
Management Area Limits and Map	8–10
Exceptions to General Regulations	10
Fish Identification and Distribution	11–13
Releasing Fish	14
Volunteer Programs	15
Where to Take Young Anglers	15
Yellowstone’s Fishery	16
Frequently Asked Questions	17
For More Information	Back Cover



Aquatic Invasive Species

Already here



whirling disease parasite



New Zealand mud snail

Several invasive species already exist in Yellowstone's waters; the most harmful are:

Whirling disease parasite causes deformities in young native trout, which then cannot feed normally and are vulnerable to predation. Whirling disease exists in Pelican Creek and its tributaries, one of the largest aquatic systems draining into Yellowstone Lake.

New Zealand mud snails occur in many park streams, where they consume aquatic vegetation that immature trout and other native species depend on.

Lake trout, a non-native predatory species, were introduced to Yellowstone and Heart lakes, which are native cutthroat waters. They grow much larger than native cutthroat trout and consume the native trout's young and adults, and compete with the native trout for food.



lake trout

On their way



Eurasian water-milfoil



spiny waterflea (plankton)



zebra mussel

These invasive species are likely to arrive in Yellowstone:

Eurasian water-milfoil grows in lakes, ponds, shallow reservoirs, and calm areas of rivers and streams. It thrives in waters where motorboats are abundant (such as Bridge Bay). Milfoil colonizes new habitats just from stem fragments transported by boating equipment.

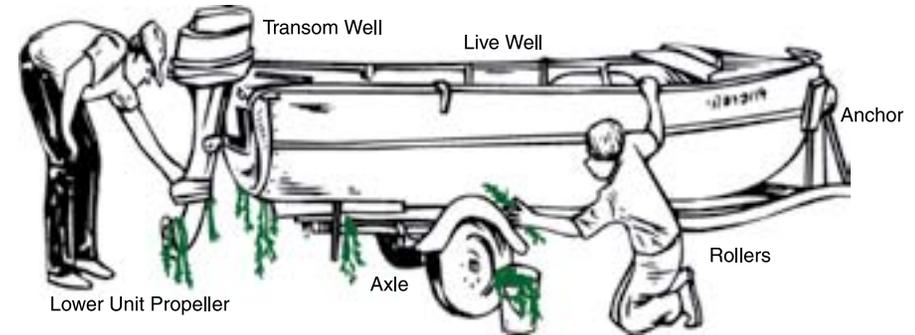
Exotic plankton, such as spiny waterflea, displace native zooplankton and are difficult for young fish to eat because of their long spines. Plankton eggs can remain dormant for decades, even surviving passage through fish guts to colonize new waters.

Zebra mussel adults are usually the size of your fingernail, but can grow to two inches in length. The larvae (immature form) can be so tiny that you cannot see them. However, exotic species larvae can live in mud, dirt, sand, and on plant fragments.

Exotic fish species, such as bighead carp, silver carp, and others can irreversibly damage ecosystems through competition with native fish.



bighead carp



Prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species

Before you enter Yellowstone National Park and any time you move to another body of water within the park:

CLEAN! INSPECT! DRY!

1. Remove ALL visible mud, plants, fish, or other tiny animals from your boats, trailers, and other equipment, including waders, boots, clothing, and nets.
2. DO NOT dump any water from other sources into Yellowstone waters. Drain your boat hull and live well in a safe location (a flat, paved, dirt, or gravel area) away from all park surface waters.
3. NEVER empty bait or release fish, other animals, or plants into a body of water unless they came out of it. It is illegal to transport live fish within the park.
4. CLEAN AND DRY EVERYTHING that comes in contact with water before entering a new body of water, following these directions:
 - ◆ Dry everything in the sun for 5 days or
 - ◆ Use high-pressure, hot (>104°F) water (available at car washes outside the park) to clean your boat, trailer, waders, and equipment

Dispose of all bait before you enter Yellowstone National Park

No natural or organic bait such as minnows, salmon eggs, worms, insects, or foodstuffs—alive or dead—are allowed in Yellowstone National Park. See *General Regulation 4b* on page 6 for details and the one exception.

1 Fishing Hours & Season Dates

The season begins the Saturday of Memorial Day weekend (usually the last weekend in May) and extends through the first Sunday in November. Exceptions are listed on page 10. Open daily from sunrise to sunset. Fishing with an artificial light is prohibited. Some areas are closed to human entry, have trail or seasonal closures, off-trail travel and daylight hour limitations, or party size recommendations. See the Bear Management Area restrictions in the *Backcountry Trip Planner* for specific rules and information.

Streams may be temporarily closed due to low water levels and high water temperatures to protect fish populations.

2 Fishing Permits

a. When required, anglers must be in possession of a valid Yellowstone National Park fishing permit to fish in the park. A fee permit is required for anglers 16 years of age or older. Anglers 15 years of age or younger have two options:

1. Children 15 or younger may fish without a permit if they are fishing under the direct supervision of an adult who has a valid park fishing permit.
2. Children 15 or younger may obtain a free permit that must be signed by a responsible adult; with this permit, a child can fish without direct adult supervision.

With either option, the adult is responsible for the child's actions and must ensure the child complies with all fishing regulations and provisions.

b. Park rangers may check permits, inspect tackle, fish, creels, or other containers where fish or tackle may be stored.

3 Boat & Float Tube Permits

All types of vessels—including float tubes—require a boat permit. Fees are charged. Float tubes are not allowed on certain lakes or on any river or stream in Yellowstone except the Lewis River between Lewis and Shoshone lakes. Obtain permits in person at the South Entrance, Lewis Lake Campground, Grant Village Backcountry Office, and Bridge Bay Ranger Station. Obtain non-motorized permits (only) at Mammoth, Canyon, or Old Faithful backcountry offices, Northeast Entrance, the West Yellowstone Visitor Information Center, and the Bechler Ranger Station.

4 Tackle & Bait Restrictions

- a. Each angler may use only one rod or line, which must be attended at all times.
- b. Only artificial lures and flies may be used. No natural or organic bait such as minnows, salmon eggs, worms, insects, or foodstuffs are allowed. Scented attractants are illegal. **Exception:** *Joffe Lake, near Mammoth Hot Springs, where children 11 years of age or younger may fish with worms as bait. See map and chart on pages 8–10, or inquire at the Mammoth Visitor Center.*
- c. Hooks must be barbless, or barbs must be pinched down by pliers.
- d. Lures may have only one hook with a single, double, or treble configuration. No fish snagging is allowed.
- e. Flies may have only one hook with a single point. Up to two flies may be used on a single leader.
- f. Leaded fishing tackle such as leaded split-shot sinkers, weighted jigs (lead molded to a hook), and soft lead-weighted ribbon for nymph fishing are not allowed. Lead core line and heavy (> 4 lb.) downrigger weights used to fish for deep-dwelling lake trout are permissible because they are too large to be ingested by wildlife.

5 Bridge & Boat Dock Restrictions

No fishing from any road bridge or boat dock.

6 Size & Possession Limits

- a. Size and possession limits vary by species and management area. The maximum number of fish an angler can keep is five fish per day. An angler must cease fishing immediately after filling the possession limit. Possession limits include all fish—fresh, stored, or preserved. **Exceptions:** No limit on lake trout caught from Yellowstone or Heart lakes; all lake trout caught from Yellowstone Lake must be killed.
- b. Fish that do not meet the specified size restrictions must be returned carefully and immediately to the waters from which they were taken. Unintentionally killed fish should also be returned to the water so they can be consumed by wildlife. It is the responsibility of the angler to be able to measure fish lengths and to identify fish by species.

7 Evidence of Fish Species

If you keep any fish, you must leave the skin attached to the fish so the fish species can be visibly identified. In the Lewis River system above the Lewis Falls (Lewis and Shoshone lakes and tributaries), you may keep only one fish greater than 20" and it—along with all other fish in your possession, while in transit or in the field—must be whole with head, skin, fins, and tail attached. Gills and entrails may be removed from all fish in possession but discarded only within the waters where the fish were caught.

8 Disposal of Fish & Entrails

You must dispose of fish and fish entrails within the waters where the fish was caught and at least 100 feet from boat ramps, docks, and backcountry campsites. For more instructions for fish and entrail disposal, see page 13.

- ◆ Possessing a native cutthroat trout, or any other native fish.
- ◆ Bringing into the park any live or dead bait (minnows, leeches, salamanders, etc), with one exception. (*See page 6, section 4b.*)
- ◆ Transporting live fish within the park.
- ◆ Moving water, sediment, fish, fish eggs, aquatic invertebrates, or plants from one water body to another.
- ◆ Using parts of trout or any other fish for bait.
- ◆ Putting any substance in the water for the purpose of attracting fish (chumming).
- ◆ Leaving a fishing line unattended.
- ◆ Traveling off marked trails in any thermal areas. *See inside front cover for more about safety in thermal areas.*

If you witness a violation, report it immediately to a law enforcement ranger, or call 307-344-7381 and press “zero” to immediately reach park dispatch.

Angler Etiquette

- ◆ Use established trails and avoid sensitive wetland vegetation such as bogs and seeps. Heavy trail use in these areas causes erosion and loss of habitat essential to many of Yellowstone's wildlife.
- ◆ Anglers must stay on established trails in thermal areas and must not cross these areas or approach thermal features.
- ◆ Avoid using the streambed as a pathway. Your footsteps can damage aquatic habitats and kill eggs and fry in the gravel.
- ◆ Do not overfish a good fishing area. Fish for a while, and then move on.
- ◆ Do not encroach on another angler's space and keep out of sight of other anglers, if possible.
- ◆ During late July and August, when water temperatures can be high, do most of your fishing early and late in the day. Allow fish to rest during the heat of the day.

Native Trout Conservation Area

This area conserves native trout in their remaining drainages, including:

- ◆ Gallatin, Yellowstone, Shoshone, Snake, and Falls rivers, tributaries, and associated lakes
- ◆ Hebgen Lake tributaries and associated lakes, including Cougar Creek, Duck Creek, and Grayling Creek systems

This area does not include the Lewis River system above Lewis Falls (Lewis and Shoshone lakes and tributaries).

Possession and length limits:

- ◆ Catch and release all native species.
- ◆ Possession limit: 5 combined non-native fish any size per day.
- ◆ No possession limit on lake trout in Heart or Yellowstone lakes.
- ◆ All lake trout from Yellowstone Lake must be killed.

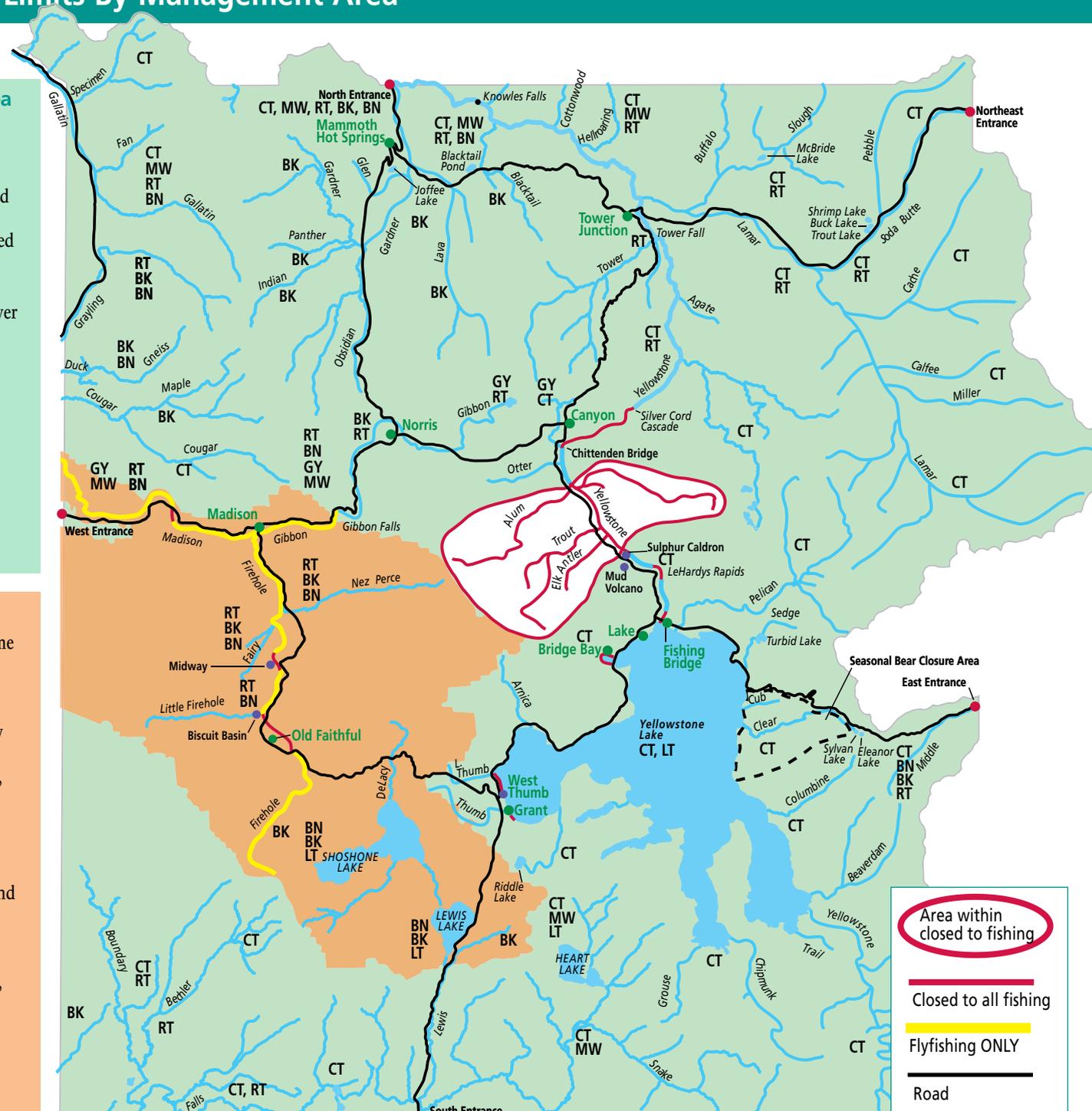
Wild Trout Enhancement Area

This area conserves native trout and some non-native trout. It includes:

- ◆ Madison River, its tributaries and associated lakes (but not including streams and associated lakes tributary to Hebgen Lake).
- ◆ Lewis River system above Lewis Falls, including Lewis and Shoshone lakes and their tributaries.

Possession and length limits:

- ◆ Catch and release all native species.
- ◆ Catch and release all rainbow trout and brown trout.
- ◆ Possession limit: 5 combined brook trout or lake trout. Exception: In the Lewis River system above Lewis Falls, this combination may include two brown trout.
- ◆ Above Lewis Falls, one fish >20"; all fish in possession must remain whole. See Regulation 7, page 7.



If a stream or lake is not listed by name or as a tributary, general regulations apply. You must follow bear management and hydrothermal area restrictions listed in the *Backcountry Trip Planner*, which is available in backcountry offices or at www.nps.gov/yell/planyourvisit/publications.htm.

<p>Madison & Gallatin River Drainages (including Firehole and Gibbon rivers and tributaries)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Closed to fishing: Firehole River from road bridge 1/2 mile upstream of Old Faithful to road bridge at Biscuit Basin; Firehole River 200 yards either side of Midway footbridge; Madison River from Seven Mile Bridge upstream 250 yards. Flyfishing only: Madison River, Firehole River, Gibbon River below Gibbon Falls (not including their tributaries). Use only artificial flies regardless of the type of rod or line.
<p>Snake River Drainage (Snake and Lewis rivers and tributaries)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Heart Lake opens to fishing July 1 due to bear activity. No size or possession limit on lake trout caught in Heart Lake. Above Lewis Falls, one fish >20"; all fish in possession must remain whole. See p. 7, Section 7.
<p>Lower Yellowstone River Drainage (Yellowstone and Lamar Rivers & tributaries between North Park Boundary and Chittenden Bridge near Canyon)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Agate and Cottonwood creeks, and portions of the Yellowstone River within 100 yards of these creeks, open to fishing July 15. Children 11 years of age or younger may fish with worms as bait in Joffe Lake only. Slough Creek upper meadows have been invaded by rainbow trout. If you are positive of your fish identification, please harvest rainbow trout here to help conserve cutthroat trout. Trout Lake opens to fishing June 15. Its inlet is closed to fishing all year. Shrimp and Buck lakes, and connecting waters, open to fishing June 15. Blacktail Pond area is closed to public use and travel, including angling, until July 3 to protect nesting birds and sensitive vegetation. Closed to fishing: Yellowstone River, from Chittenden Bridge downstream through the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone to a point directly below Silver Cord Cascade.
<p>Middle Yellowstone River Drainage (between Chittenden Bridge and Yellowstone Lake)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing season opens July 15. Permanently closed to fishing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing Bridge and an area one mile downstream (toward Canyon) and one-quarter mile upstream (toward Yellowstone Lake) from the bridge. The Yellowstone River for 100 yards up- and downstream of LeHardys Rapids. The entire west channel of the Yellowstone River near the road at Nez Perce Ford. The Yellowstone River and its tributaries through Hayden Valley from the confluence of Alum Creek upstream (toward Yellowstone Lake) to Sulphur Caldron.
<p>Yellowstone Lake and Upper Yellowstone River Drainage (Lake & tributaries)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Fishing season on Yellowstone Lake opens June 15. Streams flowing into Yellowstone Lake (its tributaries) and areas within 100 yards of each stream's outlet open July 15. Clear and Cub creeks open August 11 due to bear activity. Sylvan and Eleanor lakes open to fishing July 15. Boats and float tubes are prohibited. Permanently closed to fishing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The shoreline of Yellowstone Lake from West Thumb Geyser Basin to Little Thumb Creek (to protect fragile thermal resources). Bridge Bay Marina/Harbor & Grant Village Marina/Harbor and their channels to the lake. All lake trout caught in Yellowstone Lake, its tributaries, and the Yellowstone River must be killed. If you do not want to keep the fish, puncture the air bladder (see drawing page 13) and drop it into water as deep as possible.

Species Regulations and Descriptions

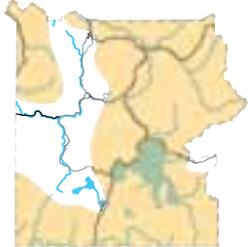
The map on the reverse side indicates known locations of fish species within the boundaries of Yellowstone National Park, using the two-letter abbreviations below. This map is provided as an aid to anglers fishing for particular species and does not imply a legal basis for species distribution.

It is your responsibility to distinguish one fish species from another.

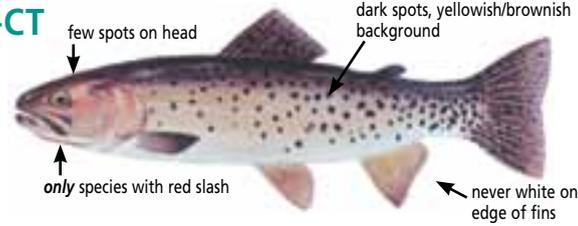
NATIVES

Cutthroat Trout—CT

CATCH & RELEASE ONLY



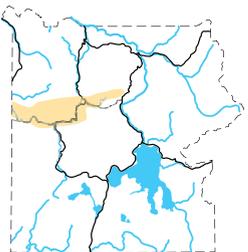
Widely distributed in many drainages



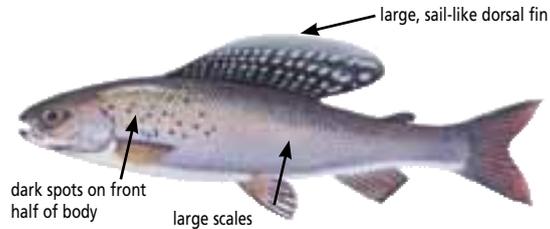
Two subspecies: **Yellowstone (large spotted form & fine spotted form, aka Snake River cutthroat) & Westslope.** All fish with red slash are considered cutthroat. **If it has a red slash, put it back.**

Arctic Grayling—GY

CATCH & RELEASE ONLY

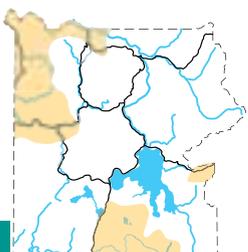


Distributed throughout Gibbon River, sometimes in Madison and Firehole rivers

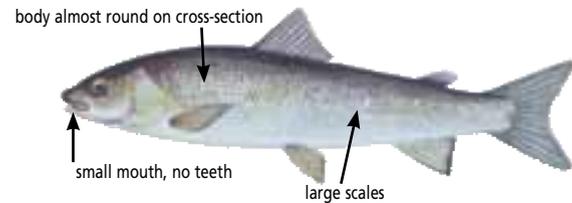


Mountain Whitefish—MW

CATCH & RELEASE ONLY

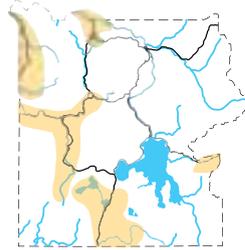


Distributed throughout Snake and Lewis rivers, other areas as noted in map

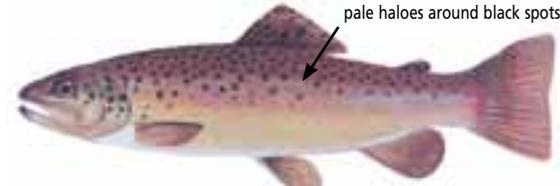


NON-NATIVES

Brown Trout—BN



Distributed in Gallatin, Gibbon, Firehole, Madison, Lewis, Snake, and Gardner rivers, and the Yellowstone River. Brown trout do not exist in Yellowstone Lake, Bechler or Falls rivers.



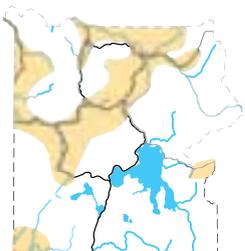
Native Trout Conservation Area:

5 fish any size in combination

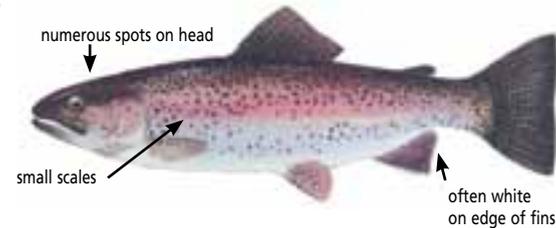
Wild Trout Enhancement Area: CATCH AND RELEASE

EXCEPT Lewis River System (Lewis Lake, Lewis Channel, and Shoshone Lake and tributaries) **TWO FISH** (only one fish of any species over 20"; all fish in possession must remain whole)

Rainbow Trout—RT



Widely distributed due to historic stocking, however, rainbow trout do not exist in Yellowstone Lake, Yellowstone River above the Upper Falls, or the Snake River.



Native Trout Conservation Area:

5 fish any size in combination

Wild Trout Enhancement Area: CATCH AND RELEASE

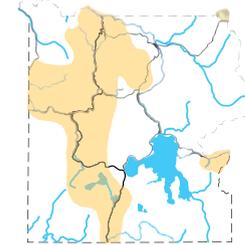
A Note about Hybridized (genetically impure) Cutthroat Trout

In cutthroat trout waters where rainbow trout have been introduced, either by intentional, historic stocking or by invasion from a downstream source, the result has been a serious degradation of the cutthroat trout population through interbreeding of the two species. Presently, hybridized cutthroat trout exist throughout the Bechler, Falls, Gallatin, Gardner, and Lamar rivers, and the Yellowstone River below the Upper Falls.

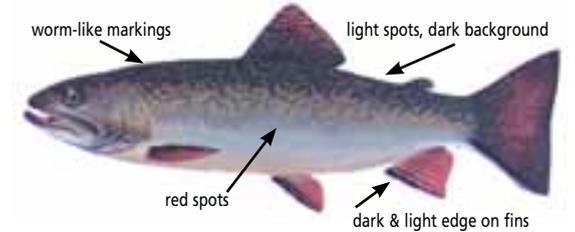
Cutthroat/rainbow trout hybrids will have characteristics (coloration and spotting patterns) that are consistent with the two species, making identification often difficult. In all cases, hybridized cutthroat trout that have any indication of a red/orange jaw slash are fully protected by catch-and-release regulation. **"If it has a red slash, put it back."**

NON-NATIVES

Brook Trout—BK



Widely distributed due to historic stocking, however, brook trout do not exist in Yellowstone Lake, Yellowstone River above the Upper Falls, or the Gallatin River.

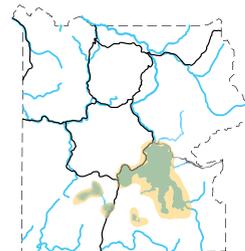


Native Trout Conservation Area:

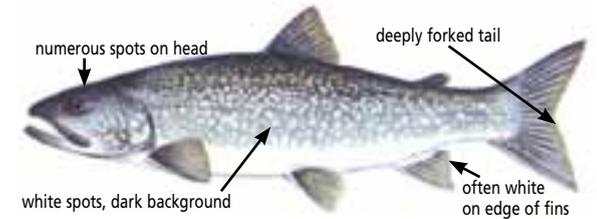
5 fish any size in combination

Wild Trout Enhancement Area: 5 fish any size in combination

Lake Trout—LT

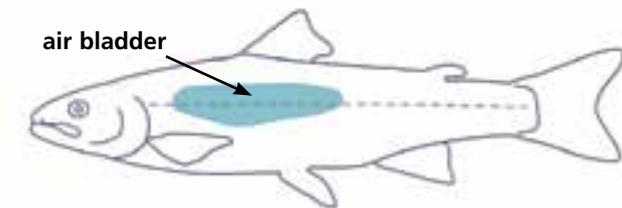


Distributed in Heart, Lewis, Shoshone, and Yellowstone Lakes.

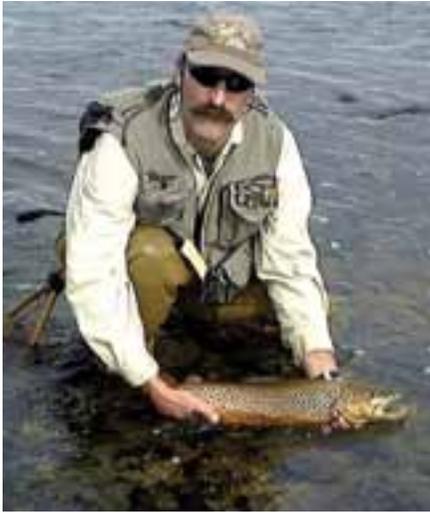


- 1. Yellowstone Lake, its tributaries, and the Yellowstone River:** No size or possession limit. All lake trout caught must be killed. If you do not want to keep the fish, puncture the air bladder and drop it into water as deep as possible.
- 2. Heart Lake:** Do not discard lake trout carcasses along lake shore as they will attract bears.
- 3. Lewis Lake, Lewis Channel, and Shoshone Lake and their tributaries:** **FIVE FISH** in combination (only one fish of any species over 20"; all fish in possession must remain whole). You are allowed to use special gear to fish for lake trout, such as lead-core line and heavy (> 4 lb.) downrigger weights to allow targeting lake trout deep within the lake. **If you accidentally hook a cutthroat trout at great depths and bring it to the surface, handle it quickly and release it carefully, so it won't die.**

If you do not want to keep lake trout, puncture the air bladder and drop it into water as deep as possible. In the backcountry, dispose of fish entrails and remains in fast moving or deep water after puncturing the air bladder. When fishing from shore, consider wrapping entrails around a rock and throwing into deep water.



Releasing Fish



To briefly hold a fish before releasing it, follow this angler's example—hold the fish carefully with wet hands.

- ◆ For all native fish and any non-native fish you are intending to release, bring the fish in as quickly as possible. Do not play the fish to exhaustion.
- ◆ Unhook the fish in quiet water such as an eddy or slow spot. Do not drag the fish across land. Use a forceps or small needle-nosed pliers to quickly remove the hook.
- ◆ If you must handle the fish, always make sure your hands are wet. (Dry hands damage a fish's protective mucous film.)
- ◆ The best way to hold a fish (with wet hands) is one hand around the tail section and the other beneath the belly just behind the pectoral fins. Never grab or hold a fish through the gills unless it is already dead.
- ◆ If you want a photo of the fish, make sure the photographer is ready before you handle the fish. Make it quick.
- ◆ Never just throw a fish back into the water. If a fish becomes passive, it is probably close to exhaustion. Gently remove the hook within calm water, then lightly cradle the fish with your hands to see what it

does. If it struggles to keep itself upright, hold the fish around its tail and beneath its belly with its head facing upstream into the current. Move the fish gently back and forth toward and away from the current. You should notice the gills opening and closing due to the rush of water. This is like giving a fish mouth to mouth resuscitation. When the fish has recovered it should swim away on its own.

- ◆ Hooks and lures typically have barbs when purchased. With small pliers you must pinch down the barbs. Without barbs more skill is required in landing and bringing in fish but hook removal is easier and less traumatic to the fish and perhaps yourself.
- ◆ Spinning lures typically have three hooks called treble hooks. With wire cutters you can snip off one of the hooks or snap one off with pliers; you also must pinch down all the barbs. Two hooks are still effective and easier to remove and less traumatic.
- ◆ If the fish is deeply hooked, cut the line—do not pull out the hook. Most fish survive with hooks left in them.
- ◆ When filling out the Volunteer Angler Report (*see at right*), you can use your rod to quickly estimate the length of your fish. Just measure and mark (with tape or nail polish) various lengths on your rod. Remember, the less time the fish is handled out of the water the better chance it has of recovering.

Volunteer Anglers

Yellowstone Volunteer Flyfishing Program

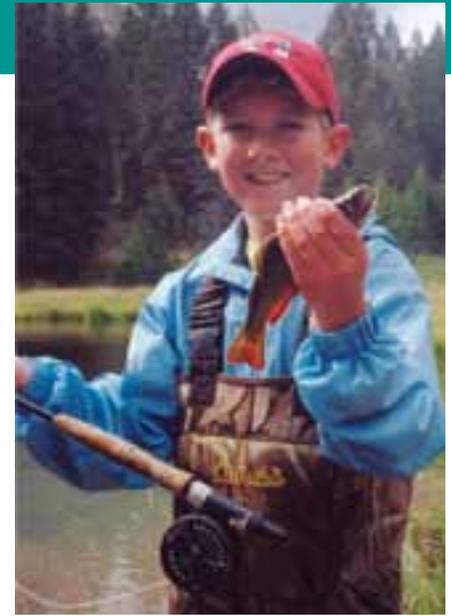
Since 2002, anglers have been directly assisting Yellowstone's fisheries staff. Using catch-and-release angling to capture fish, they gather biological information on fish populations located throughout the park. Their projects have included:

- ◆ determining the range of hybridized Yellowstone cutthroat trout in the Lamar River and its major tributaries
- ◆ documenting the Pebble Creek and Beula Lake fisheries
- ◆ documenting the status and movement patterns of grayling originating in Grebe and Wolf lakes of the Gibbon River system
- ◆ documenting the status and genetic uniqueness of westslope cutthroat trout in Grayling Creek

Through this program, volunteer anglers experience many fisheries issues first hand, and their biological data increases understanding of the park's fisheries.

The Volunteer Angler Report—Your Chance to Contribute

Since 1973, anglers have been providing valuable fishery information to Yellowstone National Park managers by filling out the Volunteer Angler Report (VAR) card, which is issued with each fishing permit. Managers use this information to estimate angling pressure, landing and creel rates, sizes of fish landed, and angler satisfaction. For many park waters, these reports are the only data available. Help us manage your park's fisheries by completing and returning your VAR card, whether or not you actually fished or caught fish. To obtain a summary of the data, indicate so in the comment section and include your email or postal address.



Where to Take Young Anglers

Families and young anglers can enjoy fishing together in many locations throughout the park. Park rangers' kids recommend:

- ◆ Mammoth: Blacktail Deer Creek, Indian Creek near campground, Gardner River at the picnic area between the North Entrance and Mammoth, Joffe Lake
- ◆ Lake: Yellowstone Lake along Gull Point Drive or at Sand Point
- ◆ Grant: Aster Creek near Lewis Falls, Lewis Lake shoreline
- ◆ East Entrance: Middle Creek, Sylvan Lake
- ◆ Norris: Gibbon River at Virginia Meadows or other meadow reaches, Solfatar Creek near campground
- ◆ Madison: Gibbon River near Tuff Cliffs
- ◆ Old Faithful: Goose Lake, Firehole River at picnic areas, Nez Perce Creek
- ◆ Northeast area: Pebble Creek near campground, Trout Lake

- ◆ 11 native species including 3 sport fish: cutthroat trout (2 subspecies), fluvial Arctic grayling, and mountain whitefish.
- ◆ 5 non-native species: brook trout, brown trout, lake trout, rainbow trout, lake chub.
- ◆ More than 220 lakes comprise approximately 107,000 surface acres in Yellowstone; 94 percent can be attributed to Yellowstone, Shoshone, Lewis, and Heart lakes.
- ◆ 1,000 streams make up more than 2,650 miles of running water.
- ◆ Cutthroat trout are a primary food for bald eagles, ospreys, pelicans, otters, and grizzly bears.

History of Fisheries Management

When Yellowstone became a national park, more than 40 percent of its waters were barren of fish—including Shoshone Lake, Lewis Lake, and the Firehole River above Firehole Falls. Early park managers transplanted fish into new locations, produced more fish in hatcheries, and introduced non-native species. By the mid-20th century, more than 310 million fish had been stocked in the park. Stocking no longer occurs. About 40 lakes have fish; the remainder were either not stocked or have reverted to their original fishless condition.

Native Fish

The ranges and densities of the park's native fish species have been substantially altered during the past century due to exploitation, introduction of exotic species, and natural



factors. Large-scale habitat degradation—such as water diversions or water pollution—has not occurred in the park.

The Impact of Non-Native Trout

Non-native trout are important to the angler experience in Yellowstone, but they contribute to the decline in the park's native cutthroat trout and Arctic grayling by competing for food and habitat, preying on native fish, and degrading the genetic integrity of native fish by mating with them and creating hybrids.

Maintaining Native Fish Genetics

Non-native rainbow trout interbreed with native cutthroat trout, producing hybrids. Once this happens, a cutthroat population can be restored to genetic purity only if all fish are removed from a stream and genetically pure cutthroat are reintroduced. To reduce hybridization in the park's cutthroat trout waters, anglers are encouraged to harvest non-native trout in the Native Trout Conservation Area.

Maintaining the Park's Ecological Integrity

In Yellowstone, bald eagles, ospreys, pelicans, otters, grizzly bears, and other wildlife take precedence over humans in utilizing fish as food. Fish management and regulations reflect this priority. For example, some waters are closed to fishing to protect threatened and endangered species, and sensitive nesting birds. Regulations ban lead tackle because the lead concentrates in aquatic environments, posing a risk of lead poisoning to waterfowl that might ingest it. Only non-toxic alternatives to lead are allowed. (See Regulation 4b, page 6, for one exception.)

How many anglers come to Yellowstone each year?

About 50,000 of the park's three million visitors fish while they are in Yellowstone.

Why can't we fish from Fishing Bridge?

Fishing Bridge, situated over a cutthroat trout spawning area, was once a popular place to fish (*photo*).

Declining numbers of cutthroat trout caused park officials to close the bridge to fishing to protect the spawning fish. Now the bridge is a popular place to observe and photograph fish.

Why are barbless hooks required?

Many fish have been injured or deformed by barbed hooks, especially in the park's popular streams, such as the Yellowstone River and Soda Butte Creek. Barbless hooks reduce hook injuries and the time you need to handle the fish, and improve the overall condition of trout in heavily-fished waters of the park.

Why is fishing lead-free in Yellowstone?

Lead is a severe environmental contaminant and a toxic substance that has no known beneficial biological function. Wildlife, such as loons, waterfowl, cranes, and shorebirds, are vulnerable to lead poisoning. Of particular concern in Yellowstone are the alarmingly low populations of trumpeter swans and loons. To minimize the effects of lead on these species, Yellowstone National Park bans most lead tackle. **Exception:** Lead core line and heavy [> 4 lb.] downrigger weights used to fish for



deep-dwelling lake trout, because they are too large to be ingested by wildlife.

How do anglers help Yellowstone?

Fly fishing is a major industry in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, and park anglers spend millions here annually. Angler groups have supported management actions, such as catch-and-release of native species and closing the Fishing Bridge to fishing, and have helped fund research on aquatic systems. In addition, anglers help by:

- ◆ correctly identifying fish and selectively removing non-native trout in waters where they are causing harm (such as the upper meadows of Slough Creek)
- ◆ removing lake trout, a non-native fish that preys on an important population of Yellowstone cutthroat trout in Yellowstone Lake
- ◆ taking actions to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species (*see pages 4-5*)
- ◆ filling out and returning the Volunteer Angler Report card (*see page 15*)