



SECTION 3: THE FISHES OF THE TWEED AND THE EYE

D.1: Rainbow Trout

Oncorhynchus mykiss

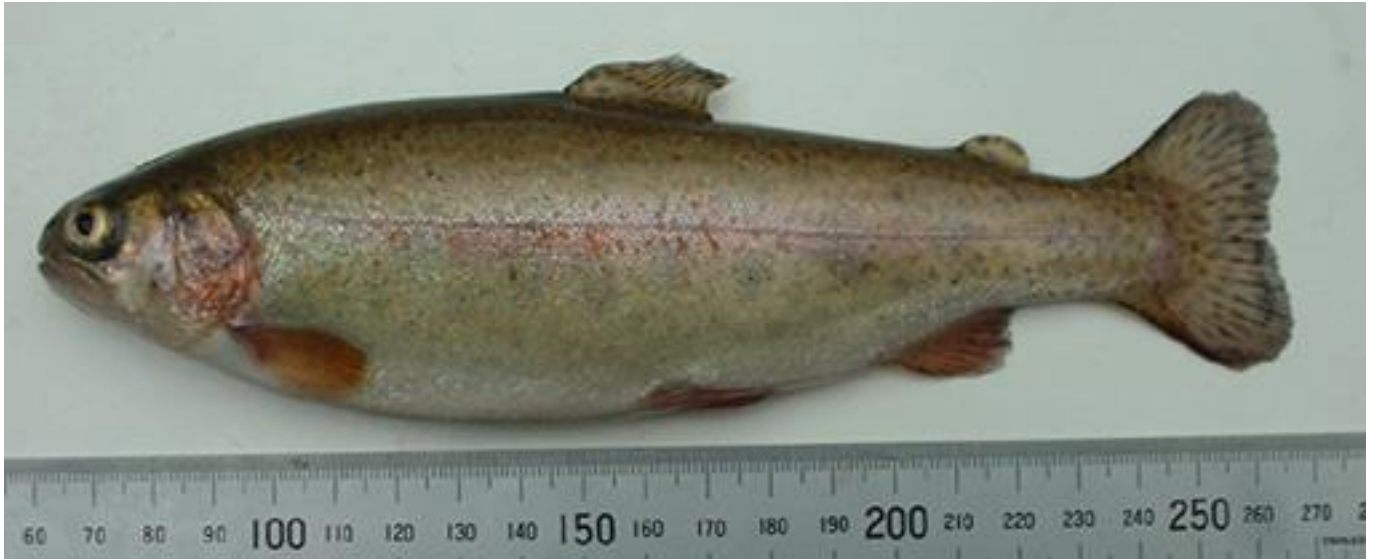


Photo D.1.1: Rainbow trout, showing the typical fin damage of a farmed fish

The Rainbow Trout is a native of the Pacific coast of North America, from Alaska to northern Mexico, where it has numerous local freshwater forms as well as the sea-going varieties generally known as Steelhead. As a prized sporting fish, they have been transferred all over the temperate world: eggs were first sent to Europe in 1882, reaching Scotland in 1888. Despite having been widely stocked into a great variety of waters in the British Isles, only six self-sustaining naturalised populations have established themselves, though more have managed a generation or two. This is in distinct contrast with other parts of the world, where they established themselves in the wild with ease. In New Zealand the fact that Rainbow Trout naturalised in the wild in the North Island and the northern South Island while the European Brown trout established itself in the southern South Island suggests that temperature at a critical time of year might be a limiting factor for them in the British Isles. As climate changes however, and winters become milder, this block may disappear, though as the strains of Rainbow Trout now stocked in the British Isles are so domesticated, they may have lost the ability to live in the wild. They are Spring spawners, like Grayling, using similar gravels and locations as Brown trout, and their other habits and diet are also similar. Rainbow Trout can be distinguished from the native Brown trout by the prominent pinkish band along the flanks, absence of red spots and the heavy spotting of the fins, and especially of the tail.

Rainbow Trout on Tweed: These are found as escapees from local fish farms and stocked fisheries, but no evidence has been found of them breeding naturally within the catchments. The earliest reference found to them in the eastern Borders supposedly dates to around the 1880's when Bolam (1919) refers to them having been "*introduced in various parts of the district during the past thirty or forty years*". However, as their eggs first came to Scotland in 1888, the "forty years" of this statement is not accurate. They were certainly being fished for in the catchment at the beginning of the 20th century according to an angling permit issued by the Edinburgh and District Water Trust for fishing in the Talla reservoir which required that no Rainbow Trout be killed before the 15th of June; the ticket was issued in 1912 but the regulations were adopted in 1907. A copy of this is in the Tweed Foundation archive.

Competition between Rainbow Trout, and Salmon and Brown trout on Tweed: There is little information on this, but at least one instance of predation is known: a Rainbow Trout of about 1lb in weight caught at Rutherford in September 1995 contained a Salmon Parr of around 3".