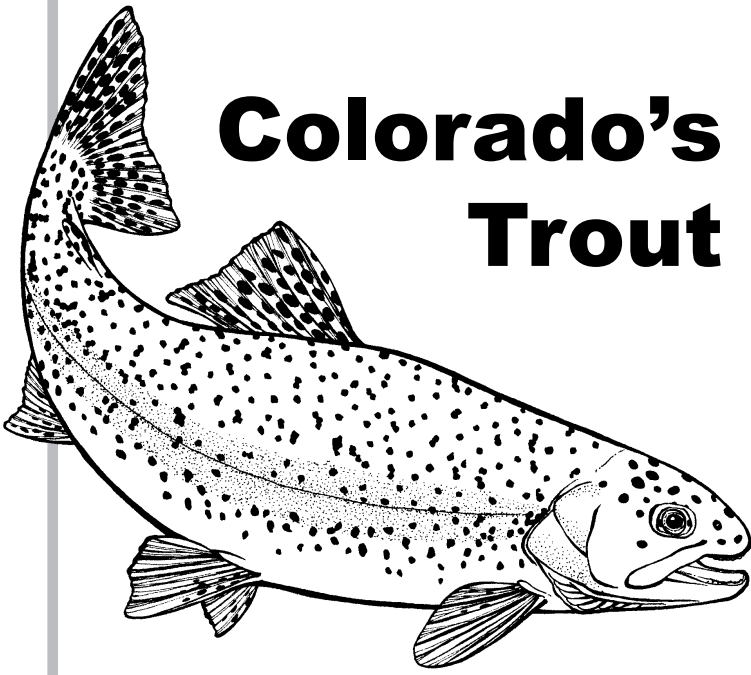


# Colorado's Trout



Three hundred years ago, an angler in Colorado could have caught only one kind of trout—cutthroat trout. Today, there are five main groups of fish that we call trout in this state: cutthroat trout, rainbow trout, brown trout, brook trout, and lake trout. How did that happen?

Where did each of the trout species come from? There is more than one answer to that question. One can ask how each species came to be. Or, someone may just want to know how each species came to Colorado.

All trout belong to the salmonidae family—they are fish with streamlined bodies covered with small, rounded scales and a fleshy (adipose) fin between the dorsal (back) fin and tail.

Salmon, also members of the salmonidae family, are anadromous. They spawn, or lay their eggs, in fresh water. Then, the young migrate to salt water and grow up there. As adults, anadromous fish return to fresh water to breed after they

reach maturity. Colorado's trout, are landlocked and spend their entire life cycle in fresh water.

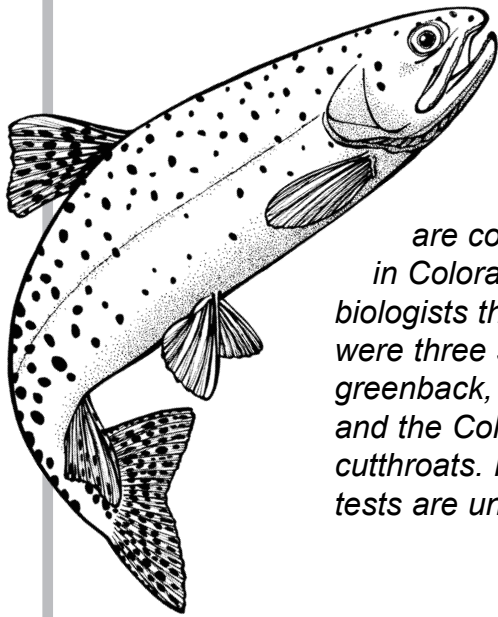
Most freshwater species in the salmonidae family are descendants of anadromous species. The “family tree” for Colorado's five trout species shows that their ancestors came from three different places.

Cutthroat trout and rainbow trout both are descendants of the Pacific salmon. Both species are native to tributaries of the Pacific Ocean in Asia and North America. The cutthroat trout is thought to have migrated up the Columbia and Snake river basins to the Green and Yellowstone river basins over the past two million years. They arrived in Colorado within the past 20,000 years, crossing the Continental Divide during the most recent Ice Age!

Brown trout are descendants of salmon found in the eastern Atlantic Ocean near Europe. Brook trout and lake trout also are descendants of Atlantic Ocean salmon, but their ancestors are from the western Atlantic, and are native to the tributaries of eastern shores of North America.

So how did the rainbow trout, the brown trout, and brook and lake trout get to Colorado? People have always loved to fish, and many prefer to catch and cook a fish that they are familiar with. As people moved around the world, they brought their favorite fish with them. Using mules and milk cans, humans transported baby trout to places the trout had never been!



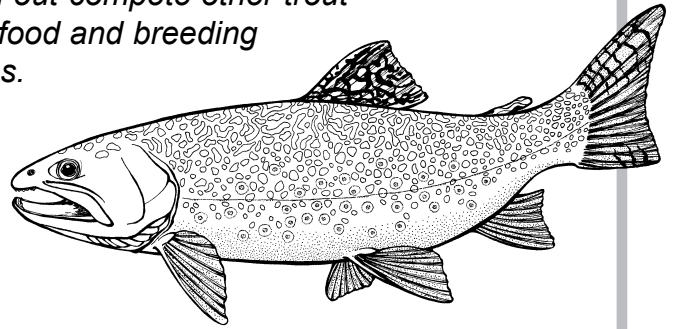


## **Cutthroat Trout**

*Cutthroat trout are considered native in Colorado. At one point, biologists thought there were three subspecies: the greenback, the Rio Grande, and the Colorado River cutthroats. New genetic tests are underway.*

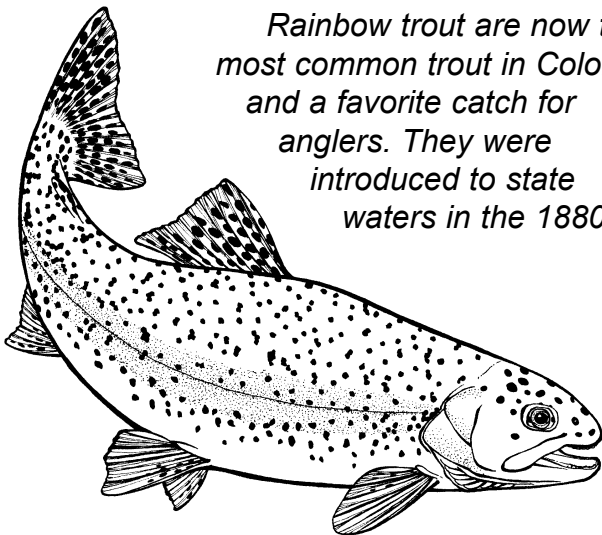
## **Brook Trout**

*Brook trout came to Colorado around 1872. They can become overpopulated and out-compete other trout for food and breeding sites.*



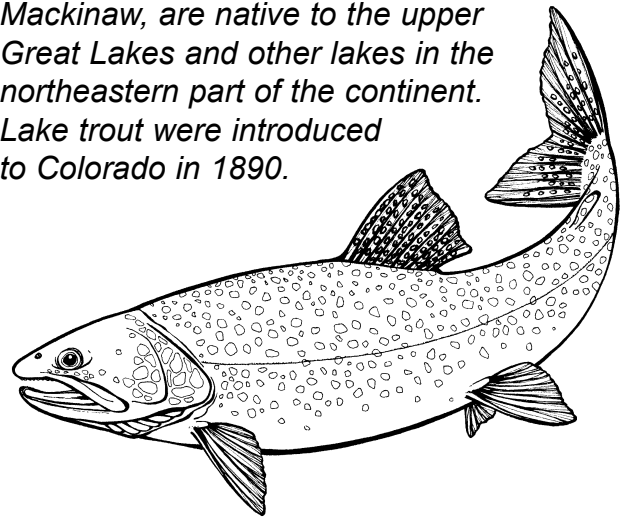
## **Rainbow Trout**

*Rainbow trout are now the most common trout in Colorado and a favorite catch for anglers. They were introduced to state waters in the 1880s.*



## **Lake Trout**

*Lake trout, also known as Mackinaw, are native to the upper Great Lakes and other lakes in the northeastern part of the continent. Lake trout were introduced to Colorado in 1890.*



## **Brown Trout**

*Brown trout were first brought to the state in the 1890s. They can now be found from high mountain streams to broad rivers flowing onto the plains.*

