



# Estes Lake

**FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT DATA**  
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**General Information:** Construction on the Olympus Dam, which ultimately formed Estes Lake (185 acres), began in the summer of 1947. Two years later the reservoir filled and Estes Lake has remained a popular recreation destination ever since. Anglers at Estes Lake will primarily catch rainbow and brown trout. Thousands of 10-12" rainbows are stocked each year in the lake for the angling enjoyment of locals and those visiting the area. These fish are stocked with the intention anglers will keep a few for dinner.

**Location:** From Loveland, follow Highway 34 west to the Big Thompson Canyon approximately 30 miles west of Highway 287.

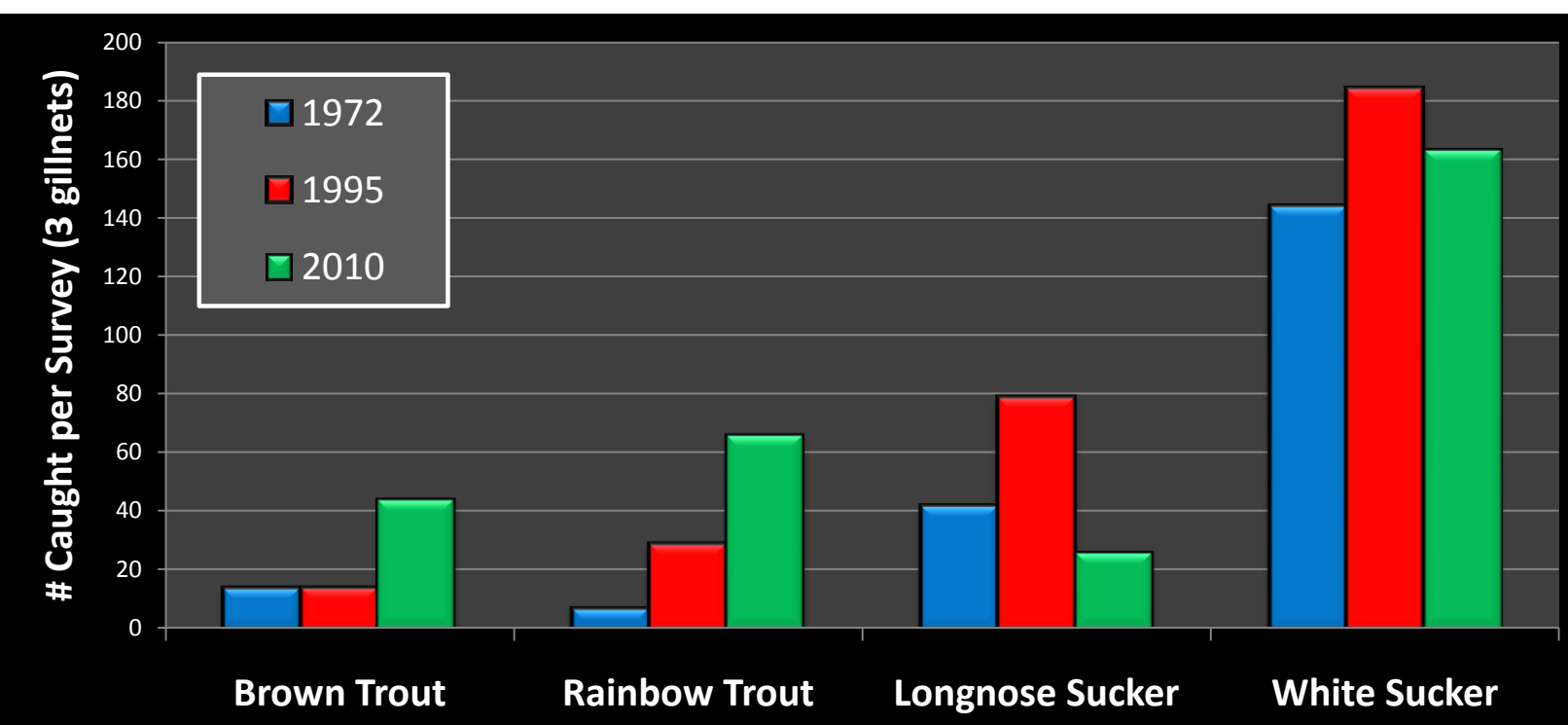
**Purchase a Fishing License:** <http://wildlife.state.co.us/ShopDOW/AppsAndLicenses/>

**Fishery Management:** Coldwater angling

<u>Amenities</u>	<u>Previous Stocking</u>	<u>Sportfishing Notes</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Marina</li> <li>•Boat/kayak rentals</li> <li>•Boat ramp</li> <li>•Restrooms</li> <li>•Walking trails</li> <li>•Elk viewing</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>2011</u></p> Hofer Strain Rainbow Rainbow Trout	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Rainbow Trout</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Spinners, bait (powerbait &amp; nightcrawlers), and flies are all productive tools. Fishing is typically good to great from May through October. Boat anglers do well trolling small rapalas (black &amp; chartreuse).</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Regulations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Daily trout limit is 4 (rainbow, brown, or combination). See regulation brochure for more information.</li> <li>•Tiger muskie must be 36" to keep. The limit is 1.</li> <li>•Use of live fish as bait is prohibited.</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>2010</u></p> Hofer Strain Rainbow Kokanee Salmon Native Cutthroat Trout Rainbow Trout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•At times the rainbows are so aggressive they often deep hook themselves while attacking bait. Anglers who encounter a deep hooked trout are highly encouraged to keep these fish. Trout hooked in this fashion will not survive.</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>2009</u></p> Hofer Strain Rainbow Kokanee Salmon Native Cutthroat Trout Rainbow Trout	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Brown Trout</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Flies and lures work best for anglers targeting browns. The browns are easily spooked in Estes Lake so early morning fishing is much better.</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>2008</u></p> Rainbow Trout Kokanee Salmon Tiger Muskie	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Tiger Muskie</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•A small population of tiger muskie roam Estes Lake. These fish are stocked to reduce sucker and perch populations. Large lures might attract one.</li> </ul>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>2007</u></p> Rainbow Trout Kokanee Salmon	

2010 Gillnetting Species	# Caught	% Total Catch	Average Length (Range) Inches	Average Weight (lbs)
Brown Trout	44	14.6%	11.7 (9 - 12)	0.47
Rainbow Trout	66	21.9%	11.4 (7 - 22)	0.42
Longnose Sucker	26	8.6%	12.5 (11 - 16)	0.82
White Sucker	163	54.0%	15.5 (14 - 19)	1.50
Walleye	3	1.0%	11.2 (9 - 14)	0.52

**Above:** The summary of the 2010 survey for Estes Lake using 4 gillnets set overnight. Generally electrofishing is used as the primary method to evaluate the fish community, however the lack of kokanee detection in previous surveys prompted a change for 2010. This method also failed to detect kokanee salmon.



**Above:** People often argue that fishing was much better 30 years ago. At least for Estes Lake, this is not true. The chart above depicts the various species surveyed in lake Estes in 1972, 1995, and 2010. Each survey was completed September or October of the particular year by deploying 3 gillnets. Brown and rainbow trout have substantially increased, in part due to advances in fish production and our ability to raise and transfer more catchable trout relative to 1972. What I found interesting is that white sucker have maintained a competitive advantage over longnose sucker for more than 40 years with sucker abundance changing little over the same time period..

Water Name: Estes Lake	Year: 2009 (6/1 - 8/31)	Estimates		
Report All Species		Shore Anglers	Boat Anglers	All
TOTAL ANGLER HOURS		31,329	2,479	33,808
TOTAL # ANGLERS		12,550	1,972	13,310
TOTAL CATCH (Trout, Walleye, Perch, Tiger Muskie)		19,213	2,889	22,102
KEPT CATCH		10,281	838	11,118
RETURNED CATCH		8,932	2,051	10,983
TOTAL CATCH/HR		0.63	1.32	0.67
KEPT CATCH/HR		0.34	0.33	0.33
RETURN CATCH/HR		0.3	0.99	0.34
AVERAGE COMPLETED TRIP LENGTH		2.8	2.9	2.8
AVERAGE FISH LENGTH (INCH)		10.6	11.1	10.6

Water Name: Estes Lake	Estimates		
Report Rainbow Trout Only	Shore Anglers	Boat Anglers	All
TOTAL CATCH (RAINBOW TROUT)	18,152	2,656	20,807
KEPT CATCH	9,963	829	10,792
RETURNED CATCH	8,185	1,827	10,012
TOTAL CATCH/HR	0.6	1.1	1.7
KEPT CATCH/HR	0.3	0.3	0.7
RETURN CATCH/HR	0.3	0.7	1.0
AVERAGE FISH LENGTH (INCH)	10.6	11.1	10.6

To learn more about creel surveys go here: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Fishing/Reports/ManagementandSurveys/>

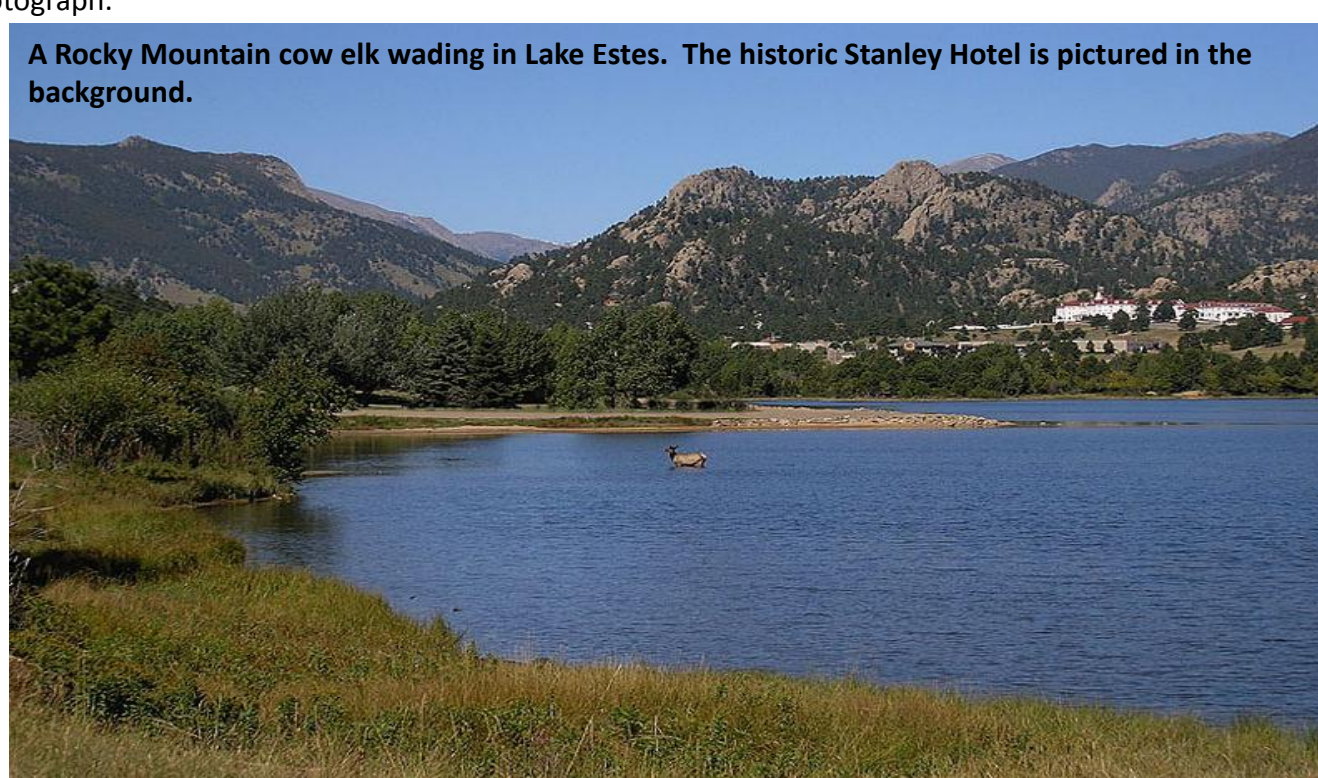
Based solely on information provided by anglers fishing Lake Estes, 20,807 rainbow trout were caught between June 1 and August 31, 2009 with slightly more than half of these fish being harvested. This information validates our current stocking rate of roughly 20,000 rainbow trout stocked annually. If you have any questions send me an email. A total of 13,310 anglers visited Lake Estes with most fishing from shore. In addition to rainbow trout, anglers also caught an estimated 878 brown trout, 258 yellow perch, 51 tiger muskie, and 9 walleye.

Based on information collected from the creel survey approximately 22,000 rainbow trout will be stocked in Estes Lake each year at 10-inches to meet fishing demands. I encourage anglers to keep rainbow trout for table fare (daily bag is 4 trout). Tiger muskie at 7-9 inches will also be stocked in order to reduce the sucker population and add an additional component to the fishery. Tiger muskie must be 36 inches to keep.

**Kokanee Salmon:** Despite stocking 214,076 kokanee salmon (2.03") since 2001, neither the creel nor semi-annual fishery surveys have detected this species. A reliable angler report from 2009 did uncover a small number caught, but in large part kokanee salmon are apparently not suited for this reservoir. Accordingly, kokanee will no longer be stocked in Lake Estes. The best opportunity to catch a kokanee in Estes will occur during the Fall of 2014 (4 years after stocking). Although I doubt this will be a substantial run, 90,000 kokanee were stocked on June 1, 2010. Details on this stocking are:

65,000 kokanee boat stocked near Estes Lake inlet  
 25,000 kokanee stocked in Big Thompson River off bridge along Mary's Lake Road

**Future Management:** The 2010 gillnet survey revealed a much more robust sucker population than I had expected. In the past, walleye were introduced but have failed to reach a preferable predatory size to target the large sucker population. Stocking saugeye is not an option as Estes Lake is directly connected to Carter Lake which serves as a brood lake for pure walleye. Hence, saugeye could potentially taint Carter Lake which only contains pure walleye. Other predatory species options include splake and tiger muskie. I have requested each of these species for stocking in 2012 in addition to the annual number of 10-inch rainbow trout. If the hybrid predators are available, these fish will "trade" sucker biomass for sportfish biomass. Again, if you would happen to catch a kokanee salmon in Lake Estes I would appreciate an email/photograph.



**A Rocky Mountain cow elk wading in Lake Estes. The historic Stanley Hotel is pictured in the background.**