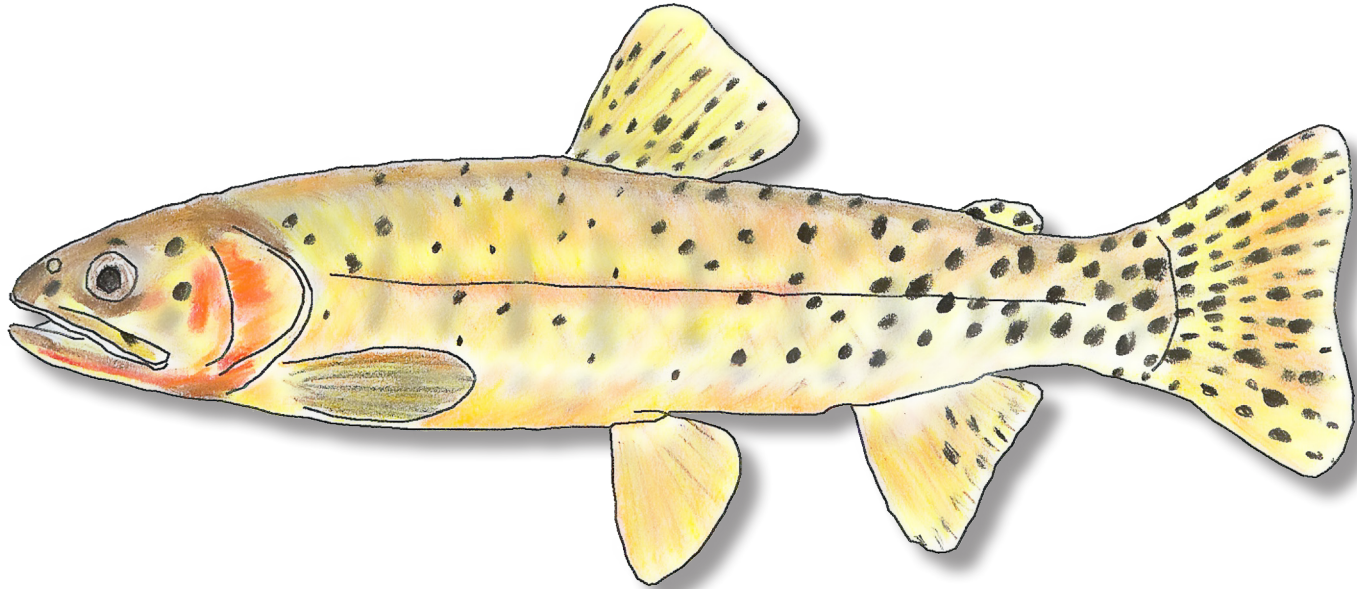


# NATIVE TROUT STREAMSIDE IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

- a joint production of *FlyFishingtheSierra.com* and **WILDTROUTSTREAMS.COM**



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# USING THIS GUIDE

This guide describes 24 trout species and sub-species sought by anglers in the lower-48 United States. Included are all of the commonly sought trout, and more than a few of the obscure ones. A comprehensive guide might easily have provided twice as many, but we think this is a useful selection that will cover most anglers' needs.

Conclusively identifying a species on the stream is often impossible in the few seconds you have to examine a trout before releasing it unharmed. While most experienced trout anglers will be able to distinguish the most common trout (rainbows, browns, and brookies), conclusively identifying other species can be much more challenging. That said, we try to highlight the distinguishing characteristics of each sub-species versus the variants it most closely resembles.

All trout exhibit significant variations in appearance from drainage to drainage (local inbreeding can exaggerate certain species characteristics and mute others), by time of year, by age of fish, and by random draw. The same species can look very different if its life has been spent in a headwaters stream, or whether it has migrated to rivers (fluvial), lakes (lacustrine), or the ocean (anadromous).

Deciding which variant you hold in your hand can be a craps shoot, especially since the differences *between* closely related sub-species - say, a Greenback or Colorado River Cutt - may be smaller than the variations among fish *within the same classification*. The history of restoration efforts is replete with examples of taxonomic errors by professionals, where, for example, biologists intended to restore a pure strain, and instead restored a different or hybridized strain in error. Before DNA testing, this was easy to do. All a fishermen can do is check the salient features of the fish we see in front of us, and come to a quick judgement.

This guide is intended to assist you in doing that. No one will mistake these illustrations for real fish, but we view that as an advantage because we can exaggerate the features that really matter. A photo-realistic image may look gorgeous, but may never match the fish at the end of your line. A real fish may look dramatically different from *any* one-off illustration or photo. In the final analysis, we do the best we can. If your best judgement is you've caught the species you've identified, what else matters?

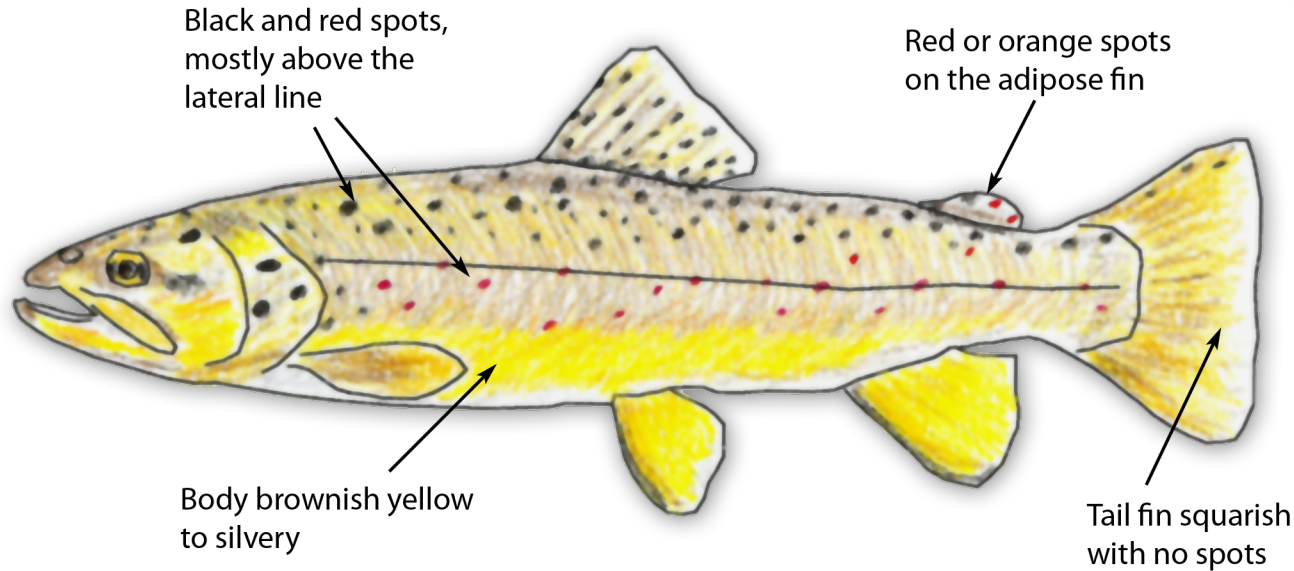
We've designed this guide to take with you. Sized 6x9, it's about the same cross-section as a large fly box, and will fit into most fishing vests/packs. We suggest printing the guide, trimming it down, and laminating the pages you need.

Each card provides a map which shows you the states (in olive green) that support the current NATIVE range. We've included a state whenever there are native streams in that state, even if only a few. The purpose is not to depict the size of the current range (state level information is way too coarse for that anyway)



but to help you decide at a glance whether you should pack a card for a trip, or check [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more detailed information. Note Brown Trout are exotic everywhere in the USA, so no native range is indicated. Other species, especially rainbows and brookies, have wild populations outside of their native range.

## BROWN TROUT (*Salmo Trutta*)

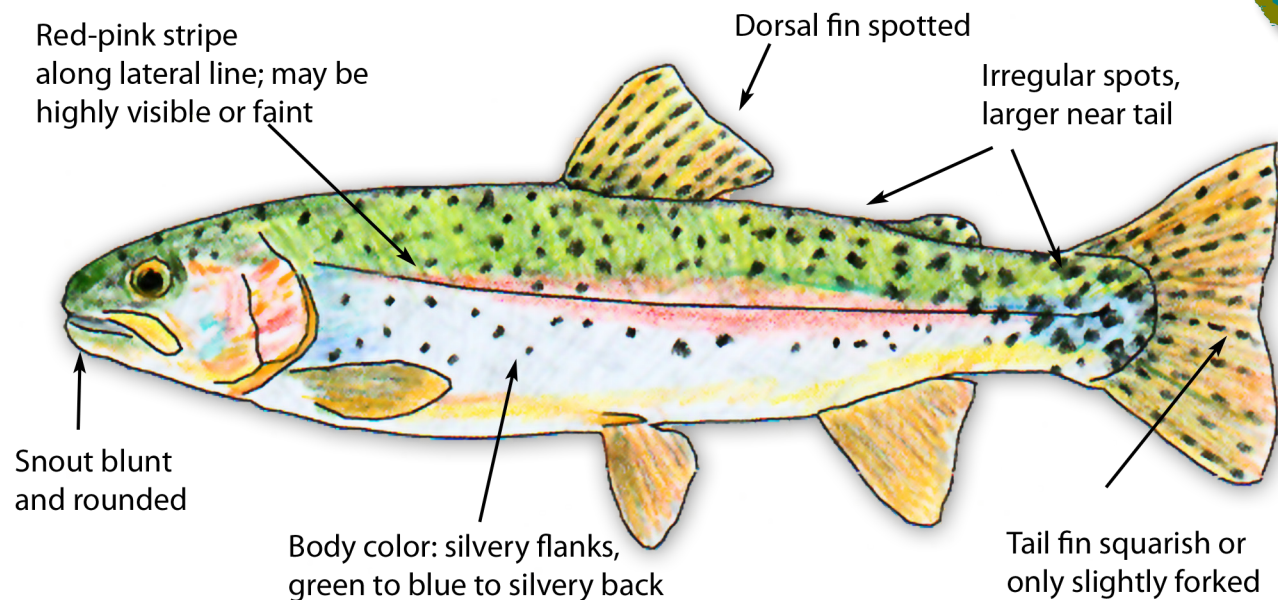


**IDENTIFICATION** - a native of the “old” world, Brown Trout were stocked in the United States as far back as the 19th century, and are now the second most widely distributed wild trout species after rainbow trout. They generally have a brownish-yellow body but this can be highly variable. Colorations can range from a deep golden yellow to a silvery gray with hints of greenish blue. It is the only trout with red or orange spots on the adipose fin, which is just in front of the tail. Black rounded spots exist above the lateral line and the tail fin is squarish with no spots.

Adult brown trout will often grow larger than other trout species because they find, occupy, and defend the prime cover and feeding spots in a stream, and predate on other fish species more readily. Browns also have better “dim light” eyesight than most other trout, which assists their predation. More than other trout, they live to advanced age and can grow to trophy size.

**RANGE** - Brown Trout are found in a high percentage of the waters with suitable trout habitat. Brown trout have adapted well to American waters and often out-compete native species. They are more tolerant of warm water than brook trout, though less tolerant than rainbows and some cutthroat and other western native species. Often, Brown Trout share many of the same streams as Rainbows. Browns will often dominate the streams if the water provides plenty of cover with undercut banks. Rainbows will dominate if the stream has defined channels and a medium to fast current. Only when the streams have a complexity of habitat desirable to both will they coexist. Browns will spawn in the Fall when water temperatures drop from 50 degrees to 45 degrees. Often, they will migrate from lakes and reservoirs into the tributary streams for a period of two-three weeks. The eggs develop over the Winter and hatch in the Spring. Since most western native species spawn in the spring, they rarely interbreed with western native trout.

## RAINBOW TROUT (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)

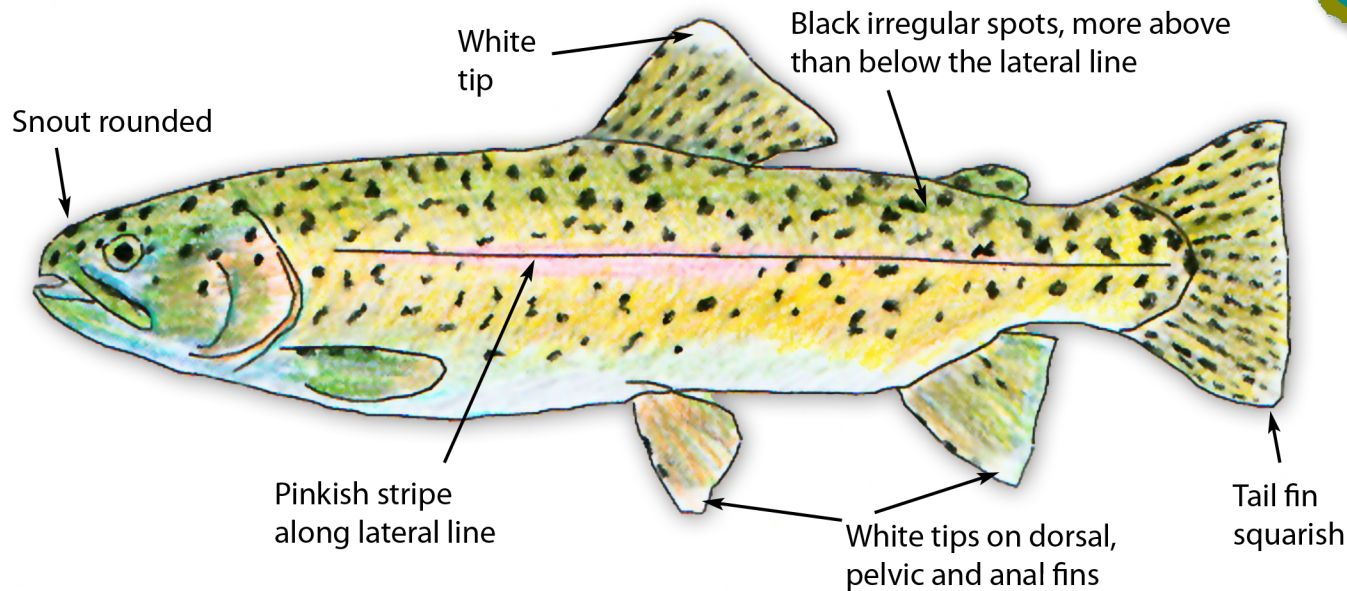


**IDENTIFICATION** - a native of the north Pacific coast, Rainbow Trout were stocked in the United States as far back as the 19th century, and are now the most widely distributed wild trout species in the world, from Europe to New Zealand. Rainbows have a sleek, streamlined shape, adipose fin, and soft-rayed dorsal fin. The rainbow can be distinguished from other salmonids by the presence of small dark spots dorsally, and on the entire caudal (tail) fin. The upper half of the body is often a dark olive or steel blue color but this can be highly variable. The rainbow often has a pinkish-red lateral stripe on the sides and similarly colored gill covers, though this can sometimes appear nearly silver when the trout are not spawning. Males are generally more colorful than females and, during spawning, often develop an elongated jaw and snout that curve in at the ends toward the mouth. Sea-run rainbows are known as "steelhead" and are described separately in this guide.

**RANGE** - Rainbow Trout are found in a high percentage of American waters with suitable trout habitat. They are native to the northern Pacific coast, from northern Mexico to Alaska, and across the Bering Strait to eastern Asia. They are more tolerant of warm water than most trout, and are the most widely stocked trout. They are now found wild in every state of the US that support wild trout, and inhabit more streams than any other species, out-competing natives. Often, Rainbows share many of the same streams as Browns. Browns will often dominate the streams if the water provides plenty of cover with undercut banks. Rainbows will dominate if the stream has defined channels and a medium to fast current. Only when the streams have a complexity of habitat desirable to both will they coexist. Because rainbows spawn in the spring along with many native cutthroat species, they often hybridize. "Cutt-bows", depending on the genetic composition, will often share many rainbow characteristics, with the distinctive cutthroat slashes under the jaw.



## EAGLE LAKE RAINBOW TROUT (*Oncorhynchus mykiss aquilarum*)



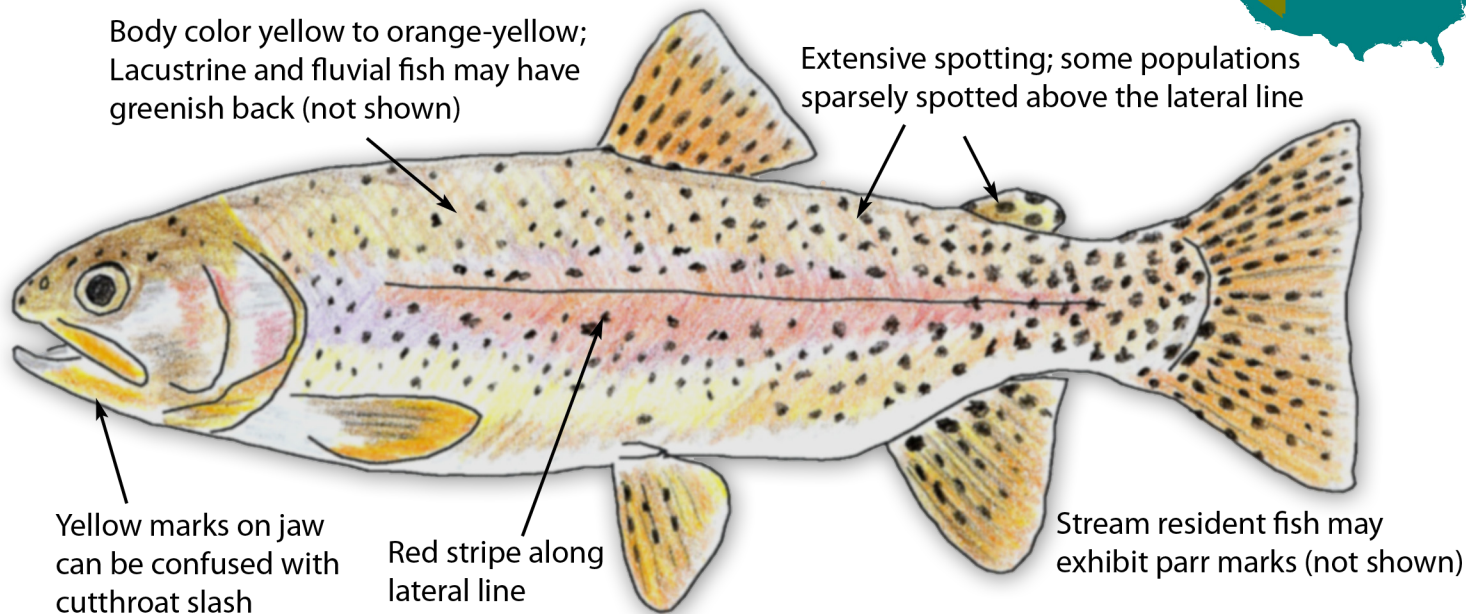
**IDENTIFICATION** - The Eagle Lake Rainbow Trout is the only rainbow trout native to the east side of the Sierras. This trout is unique in its ability to withstand high alkalinity (Eagle Lake has a pH of 8.4 to 9.6).

The Eagle Lake Rainbow has a rounded nose. The fins and upper part of the body have large elongated spots. The irregularly-shaped spots decrease towards the belly. There is a pinkish stripe along the lateral line. The tail(caudal) fin edge is flat and has numerous, irregular spots. There is also a white tip on the dorsal, pelvic, and anal fins.

**RANGE** - The Eagle Lake Rainbow is found only in Eagle Lake and its tributary Pine Creek in Lassen County. Note that sections of Pine Creek are closed to angling, and the entire Eagle Lake basin is subject to special regulations. Check with CDFG before going out.

See [FlyFishingtheSierra.com](http://FlyFishingtheSierra.com) for more information.

## COLUMBIA BASIN REDBAND TROUT (*Oncorhynchus mykiss gairdneri*)

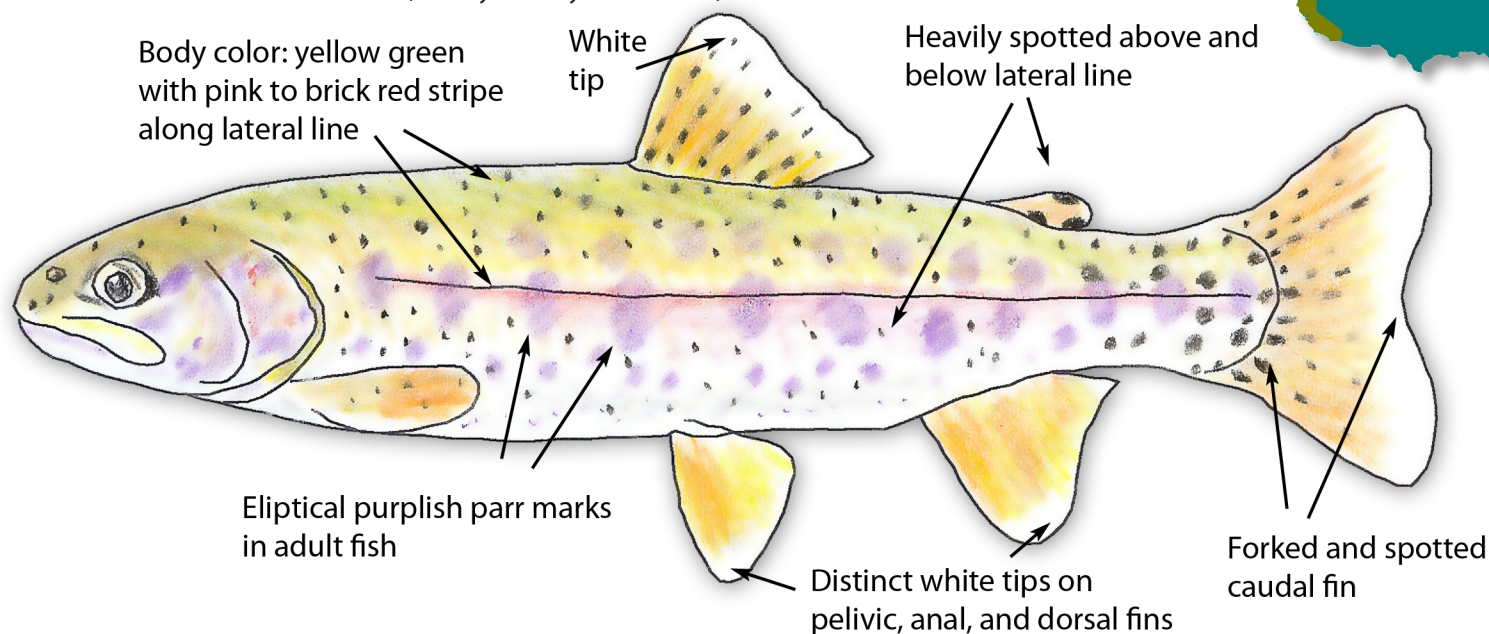


**IDENTIFICATION** - Redband Trout are generally similar in appearance to rainbow trout, though each Redband subspecies has somewhat different characteristics. Genetically, Redbands represent a link between Coastal Rainbows (which were usually the source of stocked fish) and the more primitive cutthroat, with which they share some characteristics. Think of Redbands as the original-strain, interior rainbows. Columbia River Redbands tend to show a great deal of variation depending on whether they are stream resident, fluvial, lacustrine, or sea-run. A fluvial (river) form is illustrated. Redbands exhibit a red stripe along the lateral line, similar to a rainbow. Color is generally yellow to orange yellow, more like a cutthroat than a rainbow, which tend to be more silvery. Redbands are also heavily spotted, and will often exhibit a yellow mark under the jaw that resembles a cutthroat mark. Stream resident fish will often retain parr marks into adulthood (not shown), while lacustrine (lake) and sea-run (steelhead) forms will have a greenish back.

**RANGE** - The Columbia Basin Redband trout is found within the interior Columbia Basin, east of the Cascades. This includes a broad swathe of eastern Washington (including the Yakima, Methow, and Okanogan drainages), north-central to north eastern Oregon (including the Deschutes and John Day drainages), much of Idaho (including the Salmon and lower Snake drainages), and small sections of Montana (Pend Oreille/Clark's Fork) and Nevada (Owyhee).

Relatively little specific detail is documented about Redband distribution, no doubt in part due to their similarity to exotic rainbow trout. See [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information about what is available.

## GREAT BASIN REDBAND TROUT (*Oncorhynchus mykiss newberrii*)



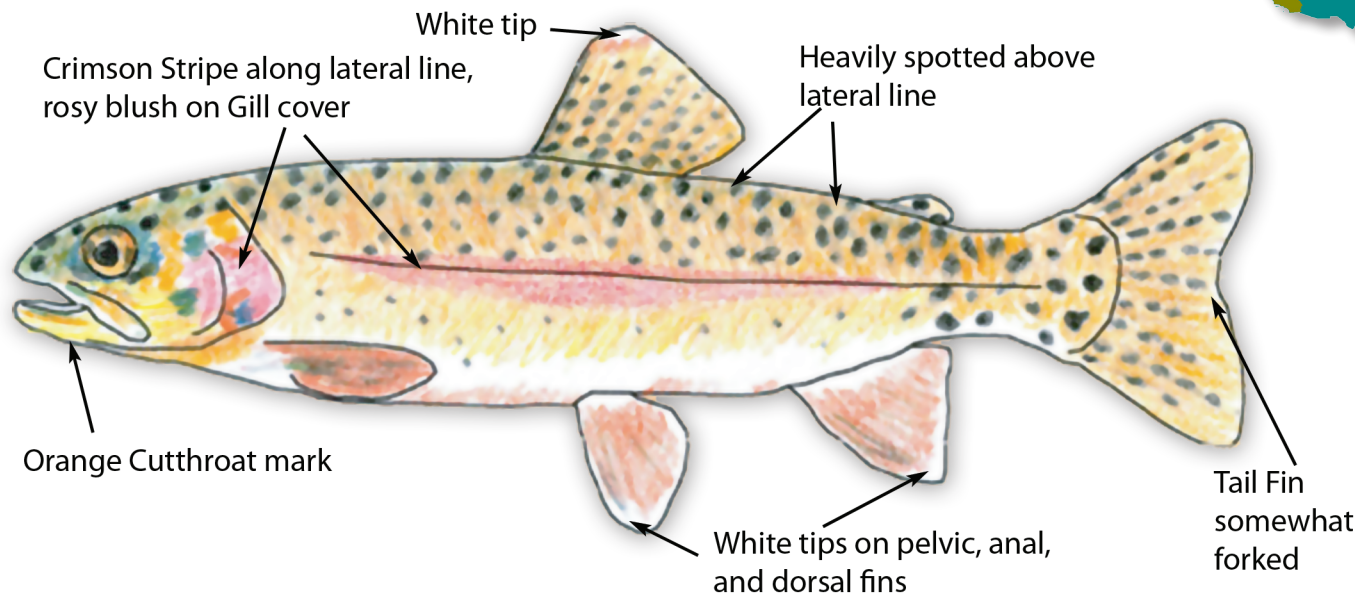
**IDENTIFICATION** - Redband Trout are generally similar in appearance to rainbow trout, though each Redband subspecies has somewhat different characteristics. Genetically, Redbands represent a link between Coastal Rainbows (which were usually the source of stocked fish) and the more primitive cutthroat, with which they share some characteristics. Think of Redbands as the original-strain, interior rainbows. Today, pure Redbands are hard to find, as they've hybridized extensively with coastal rainbows that were stocked in the same areas.

The Great Basin Redbands generally have elliptical, purplish parr marks that remain into adulthood. They tend to have yellow-green bodies, with a pink to brick red stripe along the lateral line, and have very distinct white tips on the anal, dorsal, and pectoral fins. Their tail is more forked than a typical rainbow.

**RANGE** - The Great Basin Redband trout is found in southeastern Oregon, and northern California. It includes the Chewaucan, Catlow Valley, Fort Rock, Harney Malheur, and Klamath basins of eastern Oregon and the Goose Lake and Warner basins of northern California.

Relatively little specific detail is documented about Redband distribution, no doubt in part due to their similarity to exotic rainbow trout. See [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information about what is available.

## MCCLLOUD RIVER REDBAND TROUT (*Oncorhynchus mykiss stonei*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - Redband Trout are generally similar in appearance to rainbow trout, though each Redband subspecies has somewhat different characteristics. Genetically, Redbands represent a link between Coastal Rainbows (which were usually the source of stocked fish) and the more primitive cutthroat, with which they share some characteristics. Think of Redbands as the original-strain, interior rainbows. Today, pure Redbands are hard to find, as they've hybridized extensively with coastal rainbows that were stocked in the same areas.

McCloud River Redbands are an even closer link to cutthroats than most redbands, as they often exhibit a cutthroat slash. They have a distinct crimson stripe along the lateral line, olive to bronze coloration on their backs, and are heavily spotted above the lateral line.

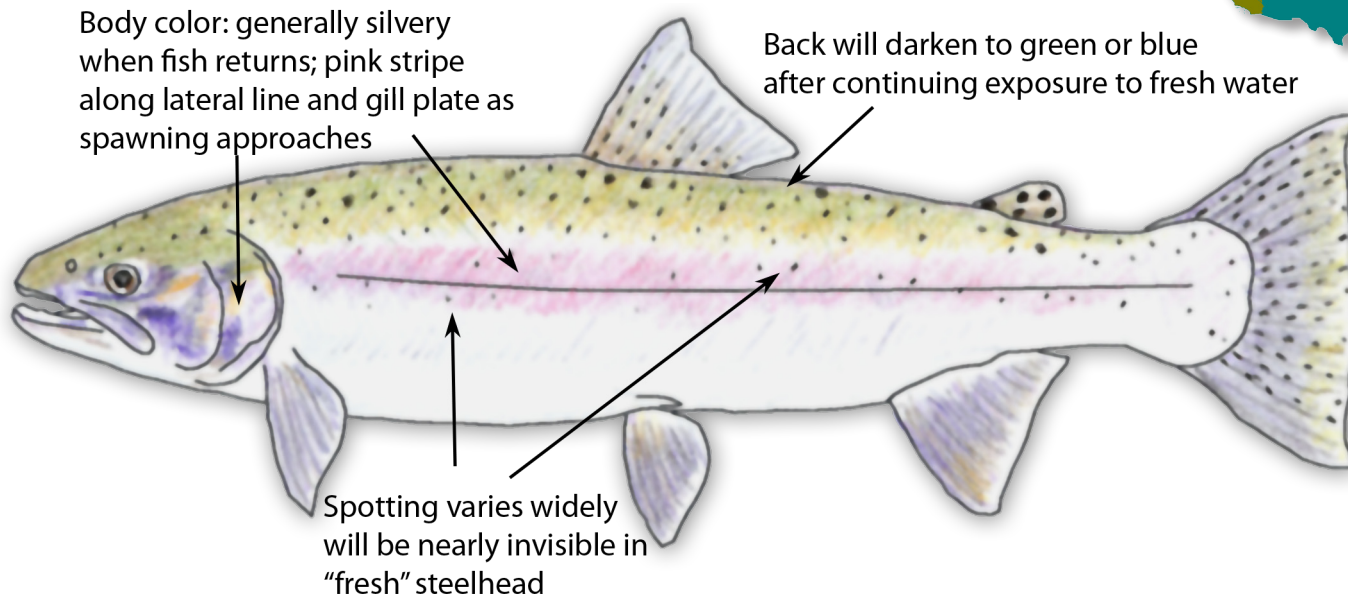
**RANGE** - The McCloud River Redband Trout are native to the McCloud River basin. Today, they survive only in a number of isolated headwater streams, above a set of barrier falls.

See [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information.

MOST OF THE STREAMS WHICH CURRENTLY SUPPORT PURE-STRAIN MCCLLOUD REDBANDS ARE CLOSED TO ANGLING. CHECK WITH THE CADFG BEFORE GOING OUT.



## STEELHEAD (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - Steelhead are sea-run, Coastal Rainbow trout which return to spawn after 2-3 years at sea (and typically 1 year as a smolt living in freshwater). They are genetically identical to resident rainbows. Steelhead that migrate to the ocean develop a slimmer profile, become more silvery in color, and typically grow much larger than the rainbow trout that remain in fresh water.

Note that due to the ambiguity in identification, many states consider any rainbow trout caught above a certain size as "steelhead" (typically 16"). Sea-run Redband Trout are also called Steelhead and migrate along some of the same rivers.

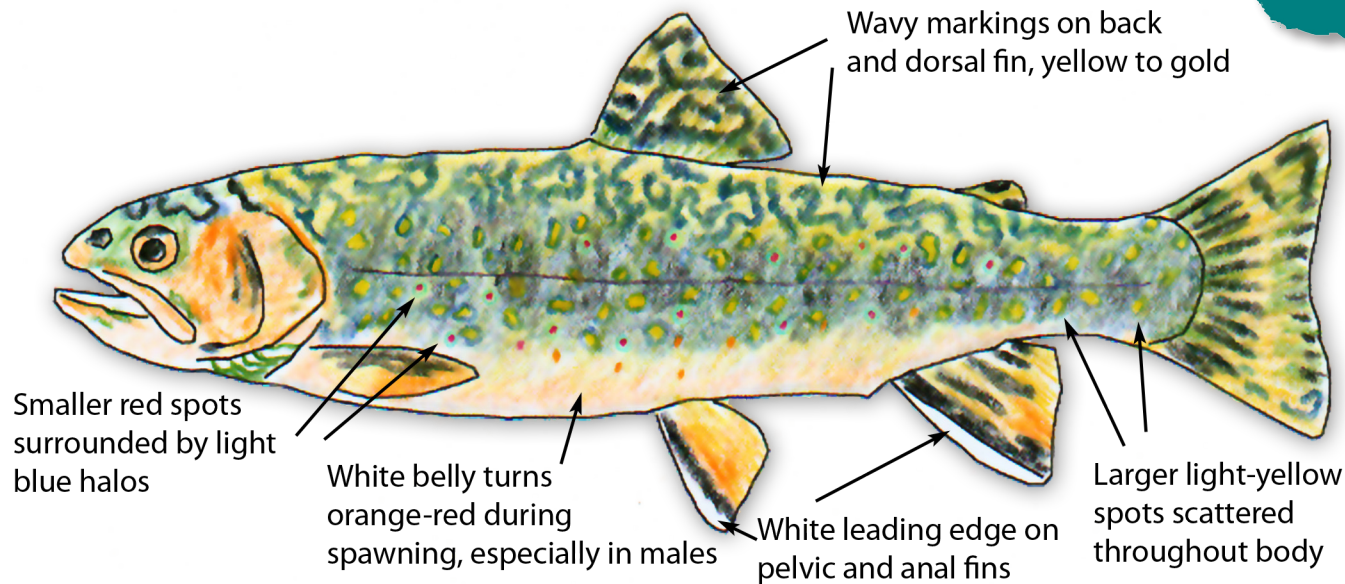
**RANGE** - *Steelhead are threatened and endangered species in part of their range within the lower 48 states. Special regulations including special permits apply, and many streams are closed to angling. Check regulations in the state where you will be fishing before going out.*

Steelhead can be found in most coastal rivers from Southern California to the Canadian border. They migrate inland nearly as far as the continental divide, and can be found in interior rivers in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Nevada.

See [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information.



## BROOK TROUT (*Salvelinus fontinalis*)

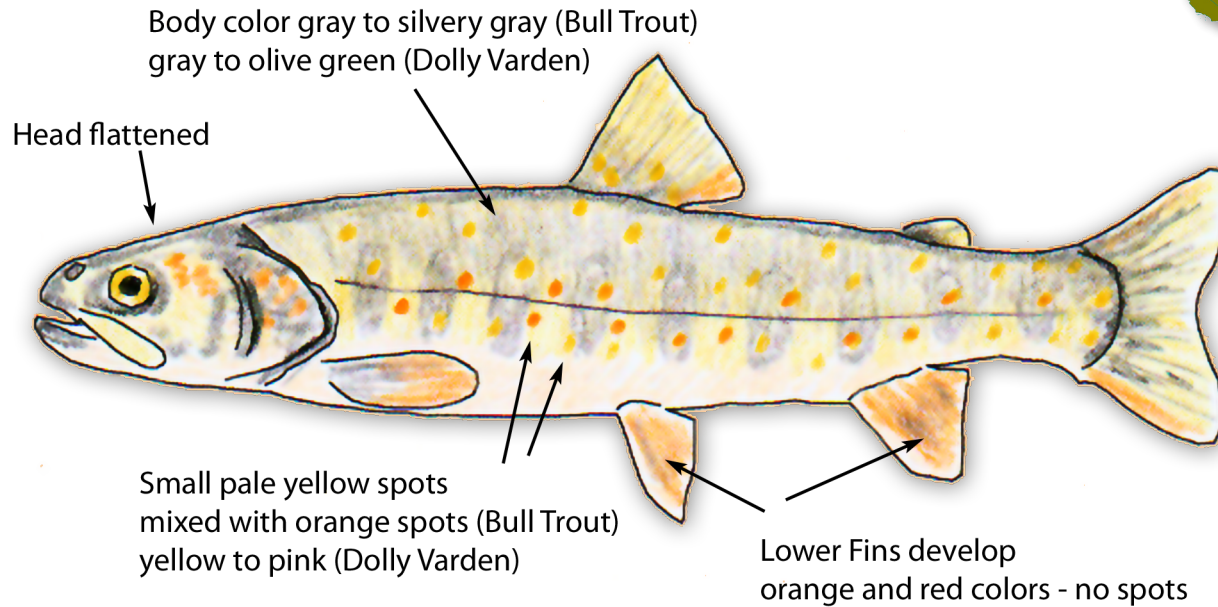


**IDENTIFICATION** - The Brook Trout is a char, and therefore a cousin of Bull Trout and Dolly Varden. They are generally dark olive green with light spots on the sides. They exhibit wavy marbling on the back, which can appear gold-green. The dorsal fin also has dark wavy lines. No black spots are present on the body but red spots are usually present on the sides. Some of the red spots can have a bluish halo. The Belly is white except during spawning when it turns orange-red, particularly on the males. The leading edge of the pelvic and anal fins is usually a white stripe, followed by a black stripe and orange-red.

Because brook trout are usually living in infertile, headwater streams and lakes, they are often small: under 6 inches. The world record brook trout, however, is nearly 20 pounds, and fish in the 4-6 pound range are common in optimal habitat. Sea run brookies are known as "coasters".

**RANGE** - Brook Trout are native to the eastern United States, originally inhabiting a swath covering most of Maine to Pennsylvania, and then extending along the Appalachian Highlands from NJ to Georgia, and along the Great Lakes, including parts of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio. Their current range in the eastern US is much smaller today, due to competition with exotic species such as brown trout and rainbows, and habitat degradation. Brook Trout need colder water to thrive than brown and rainbow trout; conversely they thrive in cold habitat that these species find marginal. Brook trout were widely stocked in high-altitude lakes and streams in the western United States where they out-competed native cutthroat, and can now be found in headwater streams and lakes throughout the West. West of the Mississippi, Brook Trout are sometimes called "eastern Brook Trout" to distinguish them from native cutts, which may also have been called "brook trout" by locals.

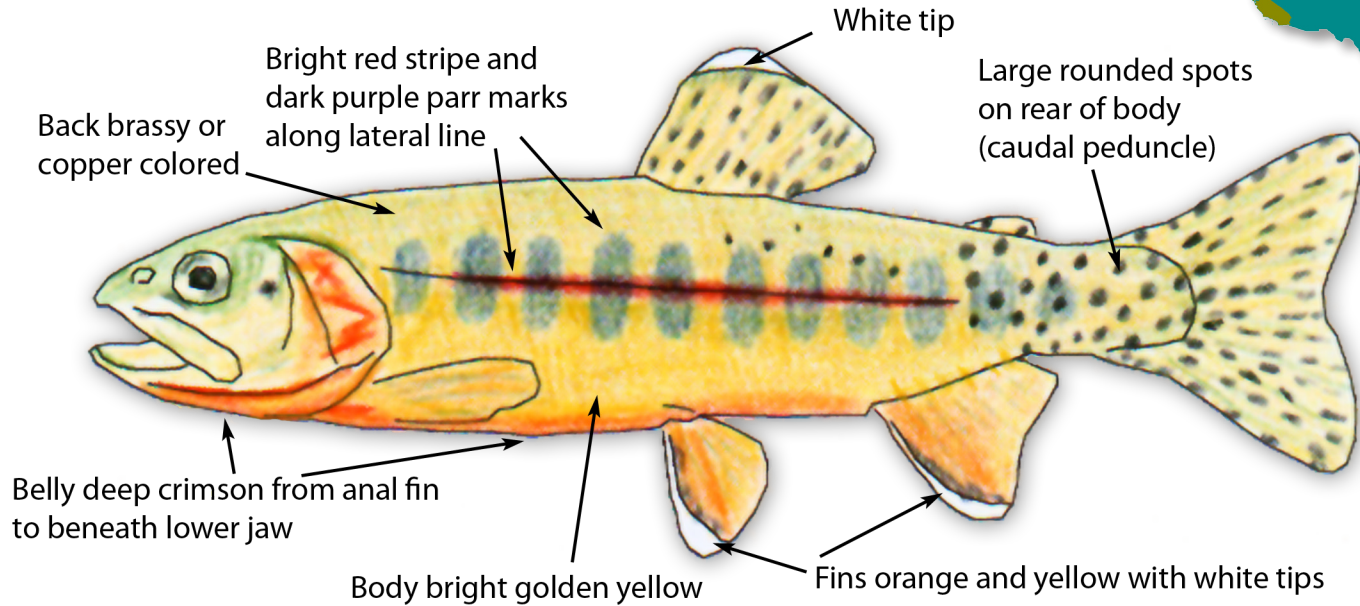
**BULL TROUT** (*Salvelinus confluentis*) and **DOLLY VARDEN** (*Salvelinus malma*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - Bull Trout, and its close cousin, the Dolly Varden, are chars (along with the “eastern” Brook Trout). Their color varies with habitat and locality, but the body is generally gray to olive green, the back being darker than the pale sides; cream to pale yellow spots (slightly smaller than the pupil of the eye) cover the back, and red to orange to pink spots cover the sides; and the pectoral, pelvic and anal fins have white or cream-colored margins. There are no Black spots on the body or fins. The key to distinguishing them from Brook Trout, which often inhabit the same water, is the back and dorsal fins. If they exhibit wavy lines, it is a brookie. If the dorsal fin is clear or olive colored, with no distinct wavy lines, it is a bull trout or Dolly Varden. Dolly Varden was named after a Charles Dickens’ character noted for her colorful green dress with pink polka dots. It wasn’t until 1980 that genetic testing confirmed that Bulls and Dolly’s are distinct species; inherent variations within each species make it impossible to distinguish them reliably, even for experts.

**RANGE** - **BULL TROUT AND DOLLY VARDEN ARE LISTED AS A THREATENED SPECIES IN THE LOWER 48 STATES.** While most streams are open to angling, Bull Trout or Dolly Varden generally must be released. **PLEASE OBSERVE ALL STATE REGULATIONS.** In the lower-48 states, Bull Trout are native to scattered streams in Pacific Northwest. Limited populations just touch on California and northwestern Nevada. In many streams, Bull Trout and Dolly Varden compete with “exotic” eastern Brook Trout. As all three species are fall spawners, they hybridize readily. Hybrids with brookies are generally infertile, putting pressure on the Bull Trout/Dolly populations.

## CALIFORNIA GOLDEN TROUT (*Oncorhynchus mykiss aguabonita*)



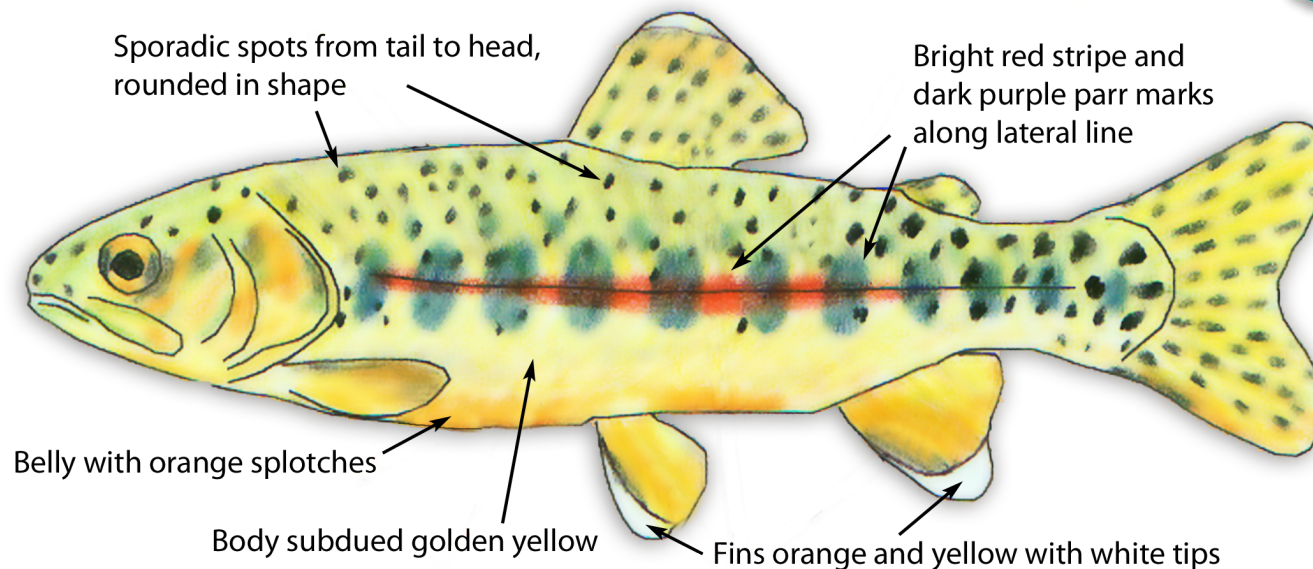
**IDENTIFICATION** - The Golden Trout, aka the “Volcano Creek Golden Trout” can be distinguished by its bright golden body. The back has a brassy or copper coloration. A bright red stripe goes through the center of the body with dark purple parr marks along the lateral line. The belly is usually a deep crimson and the pelvic, anal, and dorsal fins are orange and yellow with white tips.

Compared to the Little Kern Golden, the “Volcano Creek” Golden is more brightly colored and has fewer spots.

The Golden Trout is officially the “state fish” of California, and has been widely stocked outside of its native range and many self-sustaining populations exist outside of the original area. However, most stocked fish are actually hybridized with rainbow trout.

**RANGE** - Golden Trout are officially listed as a “species of concern”. PLEASE OBSERVE ALL STATE REGULATIONS. The CA Golden’s “native waters” are currently quite restricted, essentially the drainages of two streams: the appropriately named “Golden Trout Creek”, from its headwaters to the “falls”, and the South Fork of the Kern River. Historically, the original range of the California extended well south of the current area, but predation by brown trout, and interbreeding by rainbow trout has greatly restricted populations south of the Schaeffer Barrier. Brown and rainbow trout managed to invade north of the Schaeffer Barrier and even upstream of the Templeton barrier, so the purest populations are most likely found either in Golden Trout Creek or in the headwaters of the South Fork Kern River, above the Ramshaw Barrier. For more information check the CA Department of Fish and Game website (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/>) and WildTroutStreams.com. *Please confirm all state regulations and stream closures directly with the DFG before going out.*

## LITTLE KERN GOLDEN TROUT (*Oncorhynchus mykiss whitei*)

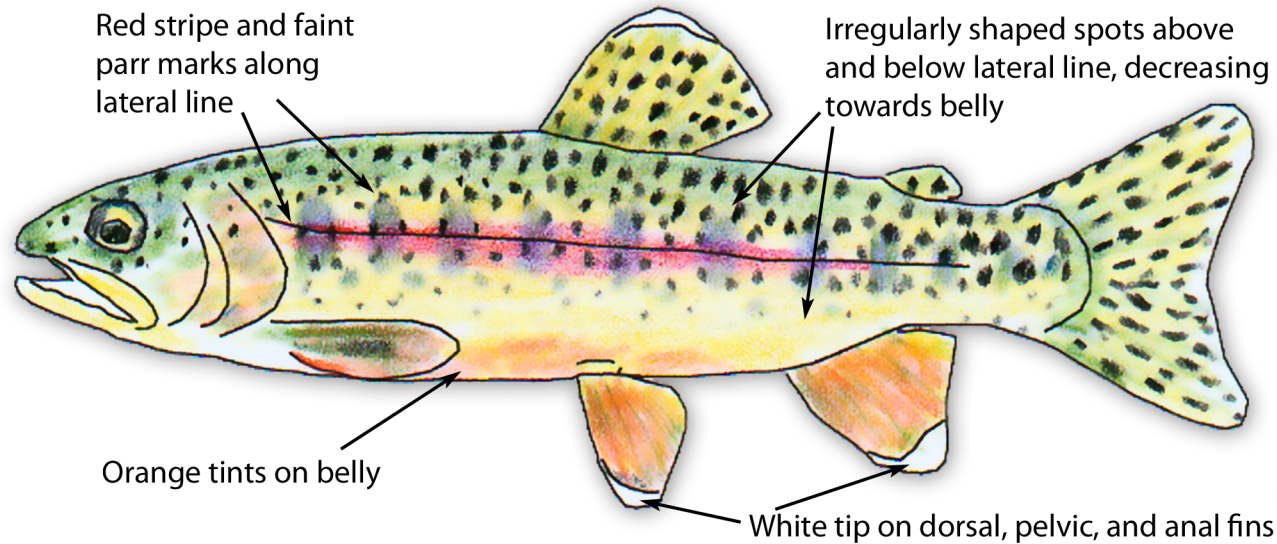


**IDENTIFICATION** - The Little Kern Golden closely resembles the Volcano Creek Golden except that it has many more spots over the back and onto the head. The body is a more subdued golden yellow with a copper or brassy back. White tips exist on the pelvic, anal, and dorsal fins. Just in front of the tail, the spots are larger and rounded.

**RANGE** - Little Kern Golden Trout are officially listed as a "species of concern". PLEASE OBSERVE ALL STATE REGULATIONS. The Little Kern Golden Trout's "native waters" are extremely restricted, essentially 5 or 6 tributaries of the Little Kern River, just west of the native range of the California Golden. For more information check the CA Department of Fish and Game website (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/>) and WildTroutStreams.com. Please confirm all state regulations and stream closures directly with the DFG before going out.



## KERN RIVER RAINBOW (*Oncorhynchus mykiss gilberti*)



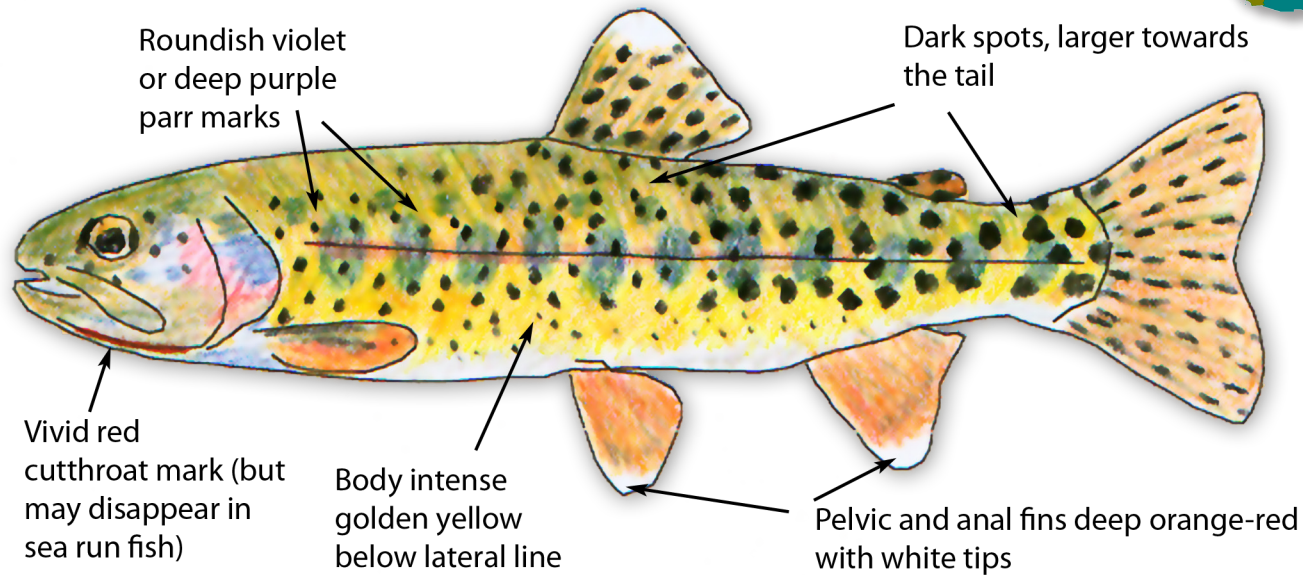
**IDENTIFICATION** - The Kern River Rainbow can be distinguished by irregularly shaped spots both above and below the lateral line. The spots decrease as they extend towards the belly. Coloration is similar to the Coastal Rainbow trout, however the Kern River Rainbow has a distinct red stripe with faint parr marks along the lateral line. The dorsal, pelvic, and anal fins have a white tip. Many fish will also exhibit orange tints along the belly.

**RANGE** - The Kern River rainbow trout's current range is the mainstem of the Kern River and several of its tributaries above Lake Isabella. Due to hybridization with stocked rainbows and golden trout, it is unknown whether any pure strain populations still exist.

See [FlyFishingtheSierra.com](http://FlyFishingtheSierra.com) for more information.



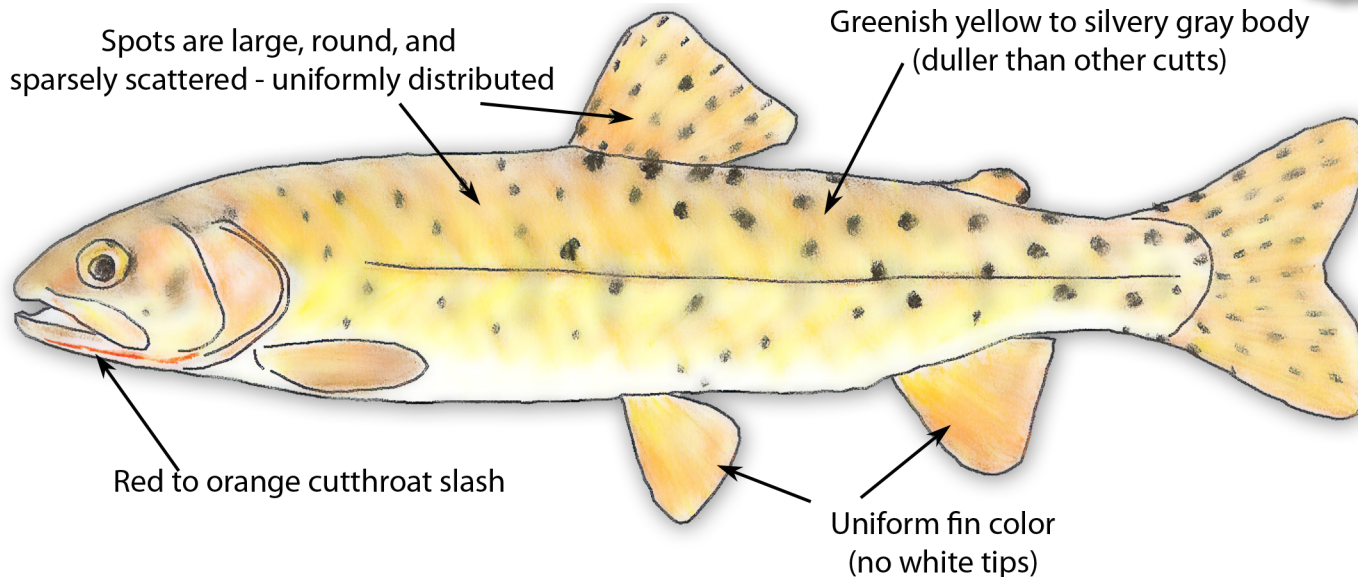
## COASTAL CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki clarki*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - Check first for the distinct orange-red cutthroat slash below the jaw. If you find one, and you're in the right range, it's almost certainly a Coastal Cutthroat, as no other cutt inhabits this same area. However, the cutthroat slash sometimes disappears in sea run fish. Distinguishing a Coastal Cutt from a Steelhead (a sea run coastal rainbow) is difficult in such cases, even for experts, as other distinguishing marks also fade. In stream-resident and fluvial forms, coastal cutts can show a brassy or golden yellow color. They are the most intensely spotted of all cutthroat; spots are almost always present on top of the head and can often be found on the ventral surface and the anal fin. Cutthroats are typically more slender and finer scaled than rainbows. They also have a longer mouth, often extending well beyond the eye. If you look down its throat, you may see basibranchial teeth, small protrusions between the gill arches and behind the tongue. 90% of cutthroats will have these teeth, which are usually absent in rainbows/steelhead.

**RANGE** - Within the lower-48 US, Coastal Cutthroat live in cold water rivers, streams, and lakes that drain the coastal mountain ranges of Washington, Oregon, and California (north of the Eel River). They are the only anadromous cutthroat, though stream resident and fluvial populations co-exist with sea-run forms. Anadromous cutts can be found in the estuaries in the spring and in the mainstem of the large rivers in the fall, when they return to freshwater to spawn. See [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information.

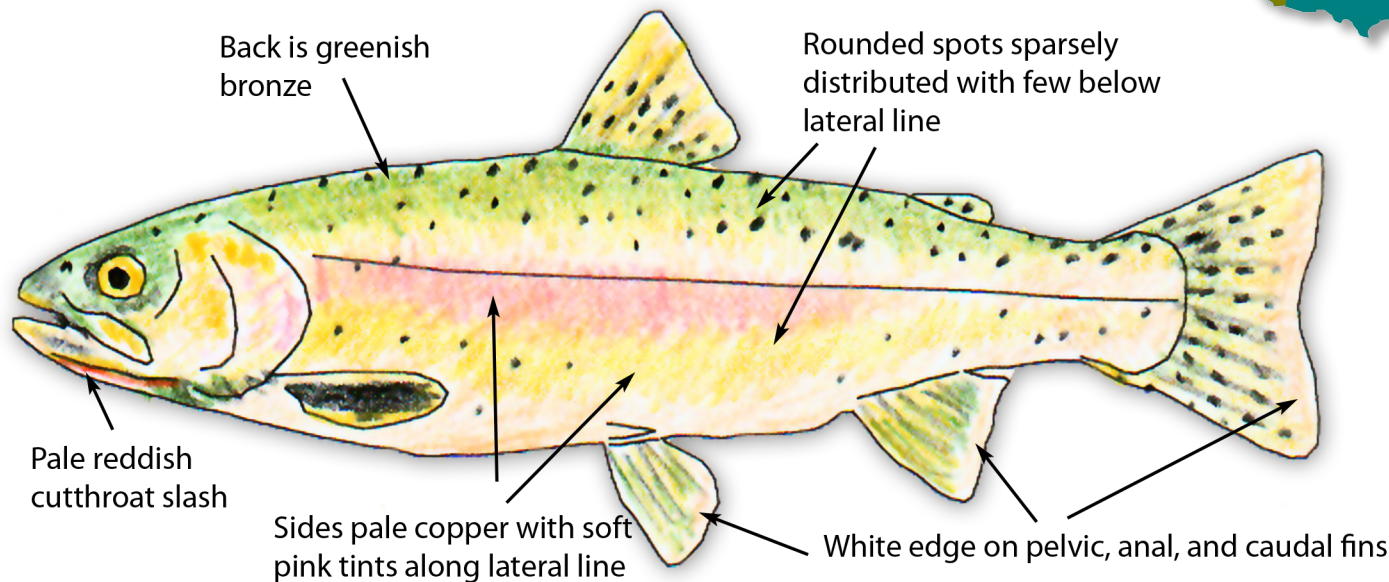
## BONNEVILLE CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki utah*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - As with all cutthroats, check first for the distinct orange-red cutthroat slash below the jaw. The Bonneville Cutthroat can be distinguished from other cutthroats by its fairly plain, greenish yellow to silvery gray body and uniform spots. Compared to other cutthroat whose range overlaps or abuts the Bonneville's: a Yellowstone Cutt will have similar number of spots, but they will concentrate more towards the tail; the Snake River Cutt will have many more, fine spots over its entire body, concentrating in the tail; a Westslope Cutt will have more small spots by the tail and none on its flanks near its pectoral fin; a Colorado River Cutt will generally exhibit much brighter colors, with a bright, golden yellow body, a brassy green back and an orange tint along the belly.

**RANGE** - Bonneville cutts have a fairly limited distribution, principally in the Bear River and Northern Bonneville basins of north-central Utah (not far from Salt Lake City and Provo), southern Idaho (SE of Pocatello), and southwestern Wyoming. The Southern Bonneville and West Desert basins support isolated populations in southern Utah, and eastern Nevada. See [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information. *The Bonneville cutthroat trout (BVCT) is listed as a "Tier I Conservation Species" by the State of Utah, as a "Sensitive Species" by the US Forest Service, as a "Rangewide Imperiled (Type 2) Species" by the Bureau of Land Management, and as a "Vulnerable Species" by the State of Idaho. This species has been petitioned for, but precluded for listing as Threatened or Endangered by the US Fish and Wildlife Service several times. Please confirm and observe all state fishing regulations.*

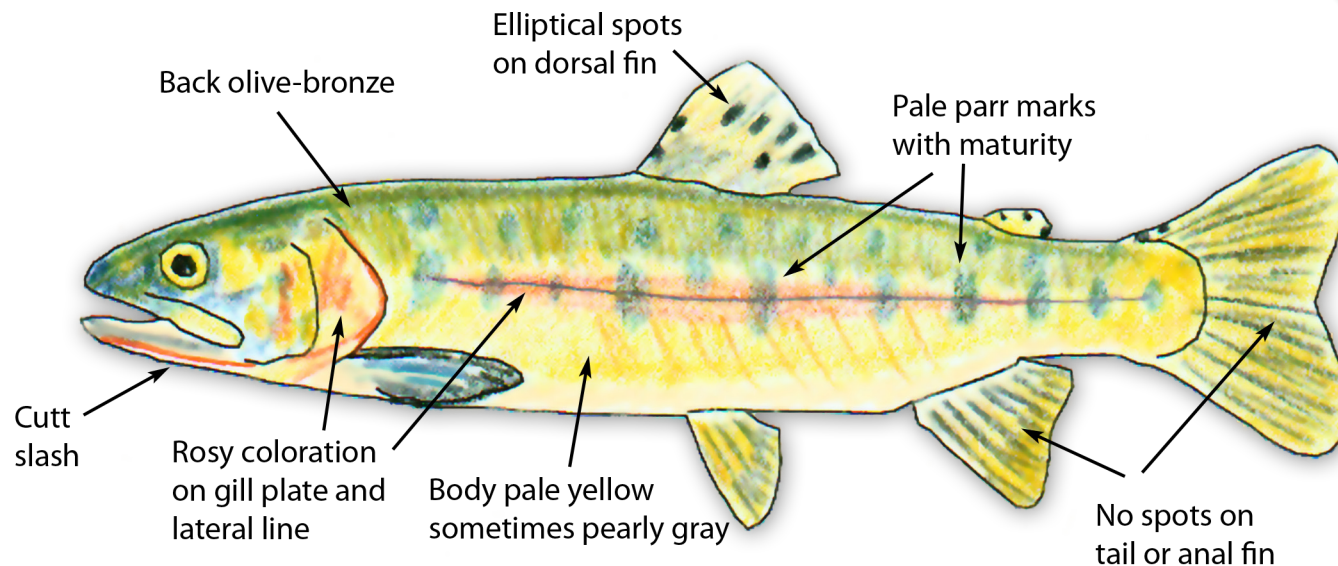
## LAHONTAN CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki henshawi*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - As with all cutthroats, check first for the cutthroat slash below the jaw. The Lahontan's slash is a little less distinct than some cuts, but still unmistakable. The Lahontan generally has a greenish bronze back and a coppery to purplish-pink body. Across most of its range, if you find a cutthroat, it's almost certainly a Lahontan. The exceptions are in northeastern Nevada, where the range may overlap with the Yellowstone, and eastern California, where it may overlap with the Paiute. Compared to a Yellowstone Cutthroat, the Lahontan will have a greenish back, and is more lightly spotted. The Yellowstone's back and body is yellowish brown, silvery, or brassy brown. It will not have white edges on its pelvic or anal fins. Compared to a Paiute Cutthroat, the Lahontan generally has 50-100 body spots whereas the Paiute rarely has more than 5, and its flanks will often show light parr marks, which the Lahontan won't.

**RANGE** - LAHONTAN CUTTHROAT ARE LISTED AS A THREATENED SPECIES. A FEW STREAMS ARE CLOSED TO ANGLING. PLEASE OBSERVE ALL STATE REGULATIONS. Lahontans are found principally across northern and north-central Nevada in the Humboldt River drainage (including the Mary's River and Reese River systems). Other populations are found in southern Oregon in the Alvord Lake and Coyote Lake basins, and in eastern California/western Nevada in the Truckee, Carson, and Walker River systems. For more information check the respective state wildlife departments and [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com). *Please confirm all state regulations and stream closures before going out.*

## PAIUTE CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki seleniris*)

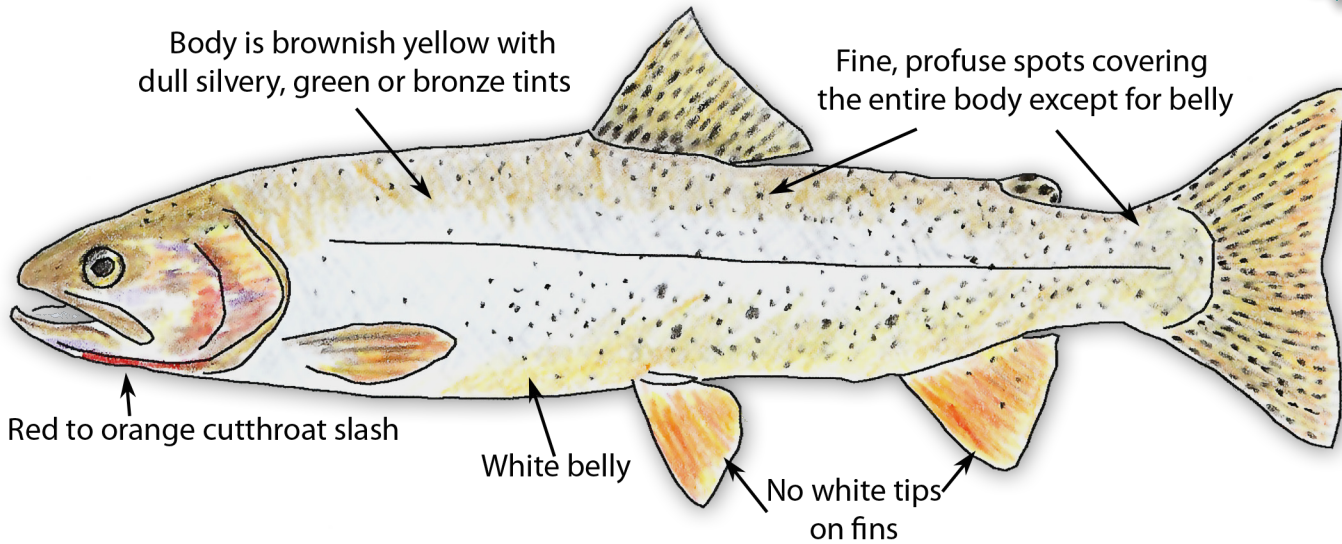


**IDENTIFICATION** - As with all cutthroats, check first for the distinct orange-red cutthroat slash below the jaw. The Paiute Cutthroat can be distinguished from other cutthroats by the near absence of any body spots. This is especially helpful in differentiating between Lahontons and Paiute cutthroats whose ranges overlap. The Lahontons have 50-100 body spots whereas the Paiute rarely has more than 5. The body color of the Paiute is yellowish to light green whereas the Lahontons are coppery to purplish-pink. Hybridized Paiute can have considerable spotting, however. If you find a fish with Paiute coloration *and* spots, it is likely a hybrid. Pure (and some hybrid) Paiutes exhibit “parr marks” — dark blotches along the sides — which become more distinct in maturity. Golden Trout exhibit parr marks as well, though they are much more pronounced. The average size of these trout is only about 6 inches due to the poor nutrients found within their existing habitat.

**RANGE** - PAIUTE CUTTHROAT ARE LISTED AS A THREATENED SPECIES. MANY STREAMS ARE CLOSED TO ANGLING. PLEASE OBSERVE ALL STATE REGULATIONS. Silver King Creek basin, in the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness Area in Alpine County, CA is the native range of the Paiute cutthroat trout. The only populations of Paiute trout in the Silver King Creek basin now exist upstream of their native range, isolated from non-native trout by barrier waterfalls. Four self-sustaining, out-of-basin populations occur in the North Fork of Cottonwood Creek and Cabin Creek (Inyo National Forest, Mono County, California), Sharktooth Creek (Sierra National Forest, Fresno County, California), and Stairway Creek (Sierra National Forest, Madera County, California). For more information check the CA Department of Fish and Game website (<http://www.dfg.ca.gov/>) and WildTroutStreams.com. *Please confirm all state regulations and stream closures directly with the DFG before going out.*



## SNAKE RIVER CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki behnkei*)

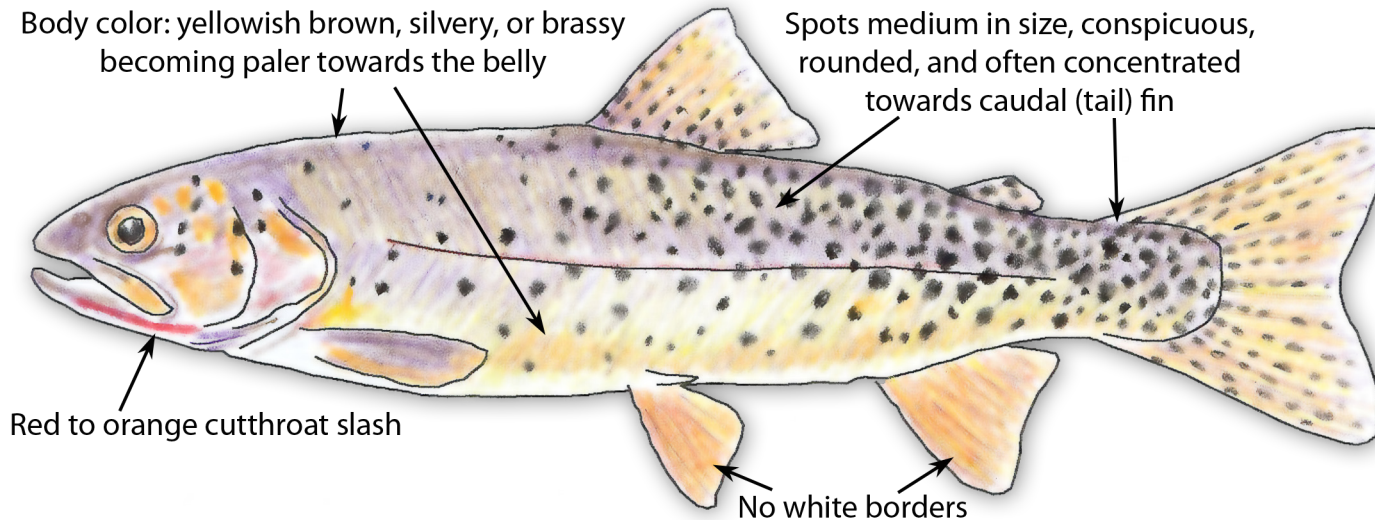
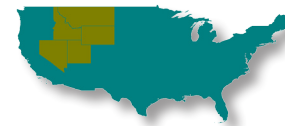


**IDENTIFICATION** - As with all cutthroats, check first for the distinct orange-red cutthroat slash below the jaw. The Snake River Cutt will have a brownish yellow body with dull silvery, green, or bronze tints. Its principal distinguishing feature will be profuse, fine spots over its entire body, concentrating in the tail. Compared to other cutthroat whose range overlaps or abuts the Snake's: a Yellowstone Cutt will have similar coloration and patterning but many fewer and larger spots; a Westslope Cutt will have spots by the tail and none on its flanks near its pectoral fin; a Colorado River Cutt will generally exhibit much brighter colors, with a bright, golden yellow body, a brassy green back and an orange tint along the belly; the Bonneville will have similar coloration, but many fewer, larger, and uniformly distributed spots

**RANGE** - The Snake River Cutt is only recently recognized as a separate cutthroat sub-species; previously it was viewed as the "fine spotted" variant of the Westslope Cutthroat. Its Latin name "behnkei" is an homage to the eminent fish biologist Robert J. Behnke, who championed its recognition. The Snake Cutts' native range is the upper Snake River drainage above Palisades Reservoir, in Wyoming. Its range has been extended by stocking into much of the Snake River drainage.



## YELLOWSTONE CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki bouvieri*)

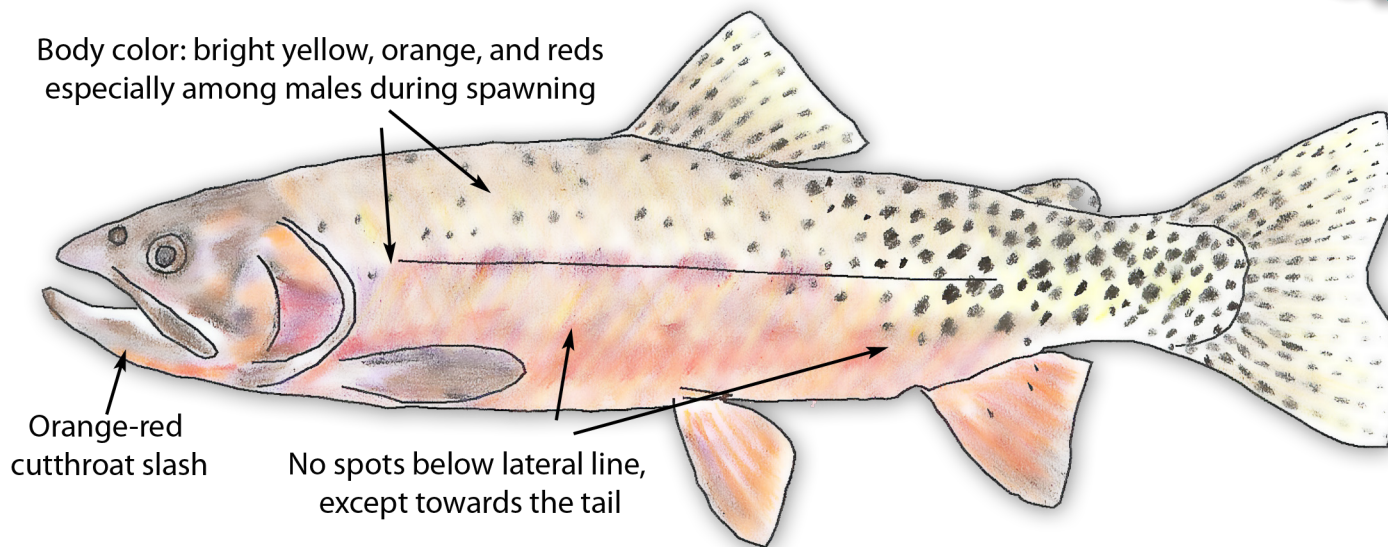
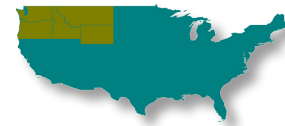


**IDENTIFICATION** - As with all cutthroats, check first for the distinct orange-red cutthroat slash below the jaw. The Yellowstone will have a drab, yellowish brown, silvery, or brassy color body becoming paler by the belly, with medium sized spots that are often concentrated by the caudal (tail) fin. Compared to other cutthroat whose range overlaps or abuts the Yellowstone's: a Snake River Cutt will have similar coloration and patterning but many more, smaller spots; a Westslope Cutt will have spots by the tail and none on its flanks near its pectoral fin; a Colorado River Cutt will generally exhibit much brighter colors, with a bright, golden yellow body, a brassy green back and an orange tint along the belly; the Bonneville will have similar coloration, but fewer, larger, and more uniformly distributed spots. Note that the location you catch the fish may be a more reliable indicator of species than direct observation: local variations mean that even experts have difficulty identifying sub-species definitively without genetic analysis.

**RANGE** - The Yellowstone cutthroat trout is native to the Yellowstone River drainage downstream to the Tongue River, including the Big Horn and Clark's Fork river drainages in NW Wyoming, SW Montana, and SE Idaho. Less than 2% of the current range is found in NW Utah, and NE Nevada.

See [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information.

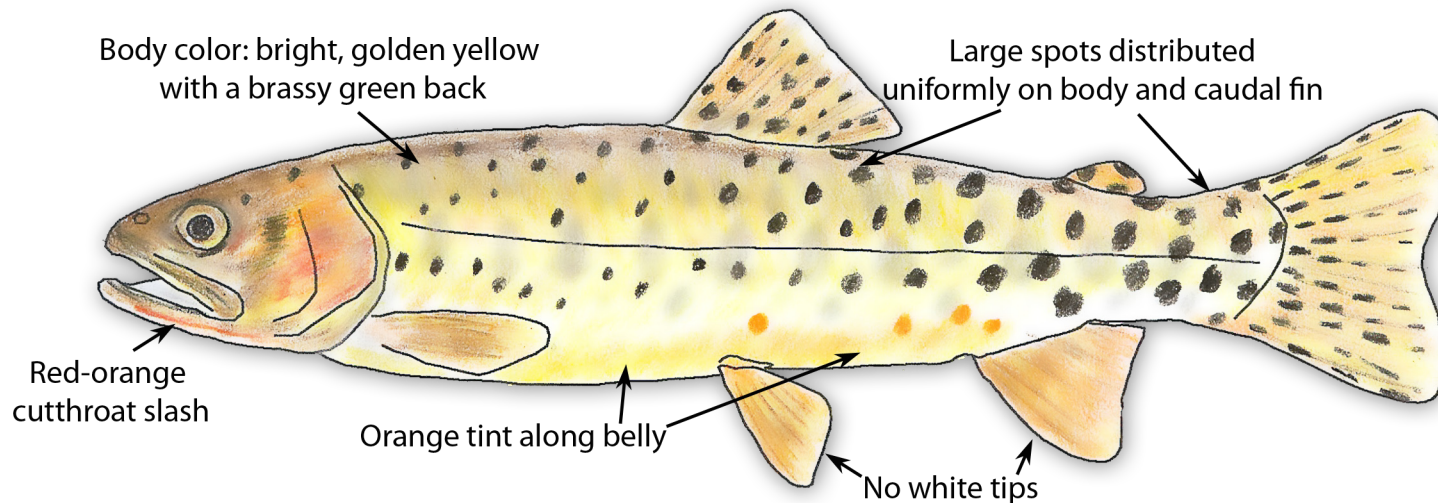
## WESTSLOPE CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki lewisi*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - As with all cutthroats, check first for the distinct orange-red cutthroat slash below the jaw. The Westslope will often exhibit bright yellow, orange and red colors, especially among males during the spawning season. It will usually show a pattern of irregularly shaped spots on the body that has few spots below the lateral line, except near the tail. Compared to other cutthroat whose range overlaps or abuts the Westslope's: a Yellowstone will have a drabber, yellowish brown, silvery, or brassy color body becoming paler by the belly, with medium sized spots that are below the lateral line. a Snake River Cutt will have many more, smaller, more uniformly distributed spots; a Colorado River Cutt will generally exhibit equally bright but different colors, with golden yellow body, a brassy green back and an orange tint along the belly with more uniformly distributed spots; the Bonneville will have drabber coloration, and larger, and more uniformly distributed spots.

**RANGE** - Despite its name, the Westslope is distributed on both sides of the Continental Divide. West of the Continental Divide, it is native to several major drainages of the Columbia River basin in Idaho and Montana. It also includes disjunct areas draining the east slope of the Cascade Mountains in Washington (Methow River and Lake Chelan drainages) and the John Day River drainage in northeastern Oregon. East of the Continental Divide, the historic distribution of WCT includes the entire Missouri River drainage upstream from Fort Benton, Montana, and extending into northwest Wyoming; and the headwaters of the Judith, Milk, and Marias rivers. The historic range of WCT is considered the most widespread geographically among the 14 subspecies of inland cutthroat trout. Check [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information.

## COLORADO RIVER CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki pleuriticus*)



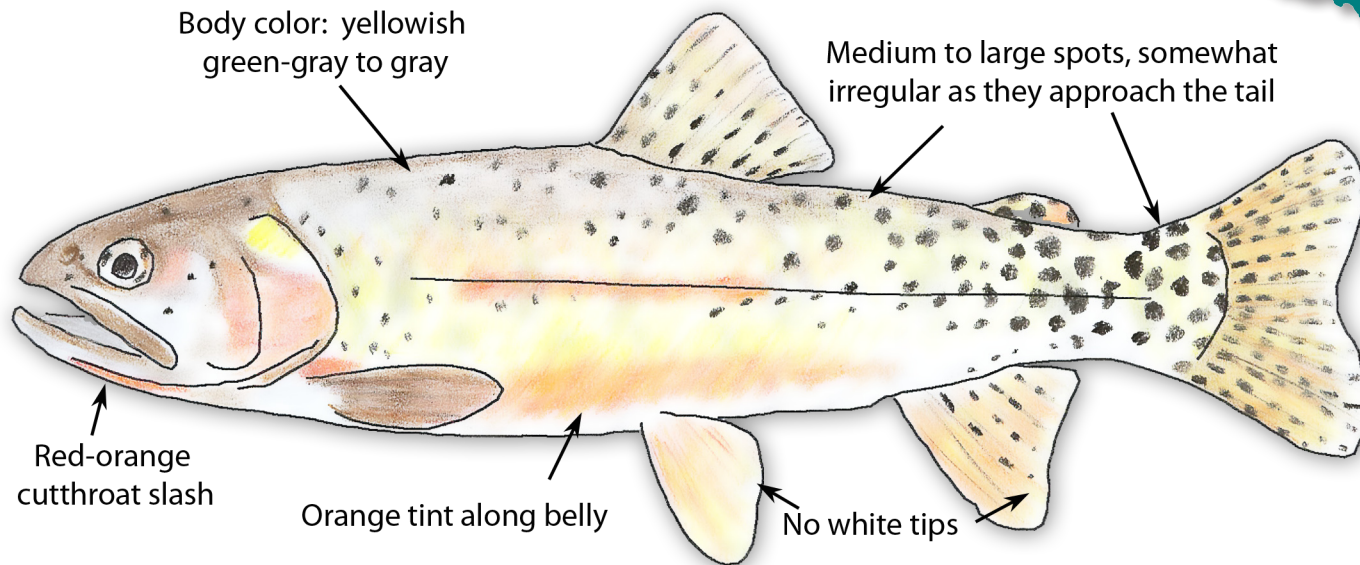
**IDENTIFICATION** - As with all cutthroats, check first for the distinct orange-red cutthroat slash below the jaw. The Colorado River Cutt is one of the most colorful, and will often exhibit a bright golden yellow body with a brassy green back and an orange tint along the belly. Spots are large, and uniformly distributed on the body and caudal fin, both above and below the lateral line. Distinguishing the Colorado from its two closest relatives - the Rio Grande and Greenback - is difficult as there is substantial overlap in appearance. Rio Grande cutthroat trout possess similar coloration, but usually have fewer scales in and above the lateral line and more irregularly shaped spots on the caudal peduncle. Greenbacks trout tend to have larger spots and more scales in and above the lateral line. Distinguishing Colorado from its more northern and western cousins is somewhat easier: a Yellowstone will have a drabber, yellowish brown, silvery, or brassy color body becoming paler by the belly, with medium sized spots; a Snake River Cutt will have drabber body color and

many more, smaller spots; a Westslope Cutt will generally exhibit bright but different colors, with a yellow, orange, and red body, and more, smaller spots that won't appear below the lateral line except near the tail; the Bonneville will have drabber coloration.

**RANGE** - The Colorado River Cutthroat is distributed across 5 states (western Wyoming and Colorado, eastern Utah, northeastern Arizona, and northwestern New Mexico) in the Delores, Gunnison, Colorado, Green, San Juan, and Yampa drainages.

Check [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information.

## RIO GRANDE CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki viginalis*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - As with all cutthroats, check first for the distinct orange-red cutthroat slash below the jaw. The Rio Grande Cutt is will exhibit a yellowish gray-green to gray body with and an orange tint along the belly. Spots are medium to large, and become irregular as they approach the tail. Distinguishing the Rio Grande from its two closest relatives - the Colorado River and Greenback - is difficult as there is substantial overlap in appearance. Colorado River cutthroat trout possess similar coloration, though generally brighter, and with more uniformly large spots. Greenbacks trout tend to have larger spots and more scales in and above the lateral line. Distinguishing Rio Grande from its more northern and western cousins is somewhat easier: a Yellowstone will have a drabber, yellowish brown, silvery, or brassy color body becoming paler by the belly, with medium sized spots; a Snake River Cutt will have drabber body color and many more, smaller spots; a Westslope Cutt will generally exhibit bright but different colors, with a yellow, orange, and red

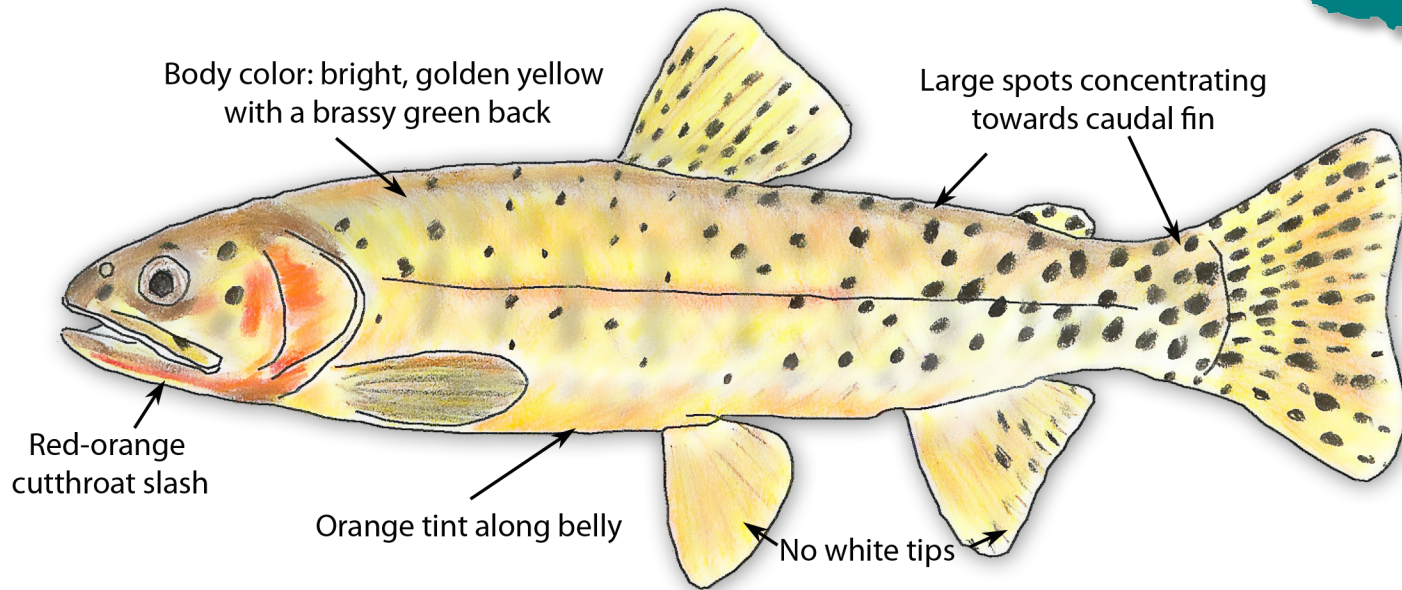
body, and more, smaller spots that won't appear below the lateral line except near the tail; the Bonneville will have drabber coloration.

**RANGE** - The Rio Grande Cutthroat is distributed across 2 states (south central Colorado and north-ern New Mexico) in the Canadian River, Pecos River, and Rio Grande drainages.

Check [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information.



## GREENBACK CUTTHROAT TROUT (*Oncorhynchus clarki stomias*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - As with all cutthroats, check first for the distinct orange-red cutthroat slash below the jaw. Greenback is one of the most colorful, and will often exhibit a bright golden yellow body with a brassy green back and an orange to red tint along the belly (especially in males). Spots tend to be the largest and most pronounced of any cutthroat trout. Round to oblong in shape, the spots appear concentrated posteriorly on the caudal peduncle area. Distinguishing the Colorado from its two closest relatives - the Colorado River and Rio Grande - is difficult as there is substantial overlap in appearance. Colorado River have similar coloring and spots that are slightly smaller and more uniformly distributed. Rio Grande cutthroat trout possess similar, though sometimes duller coloration. They have fewer scales in and above the lateral line and more irregularly shaped spots on the caudal peduncle. Distinguishing the Greenback from its more northern and western cousins is somewhat easier: a Yellowstone will have a drabber, yellowish brown, silvery, or brassy color

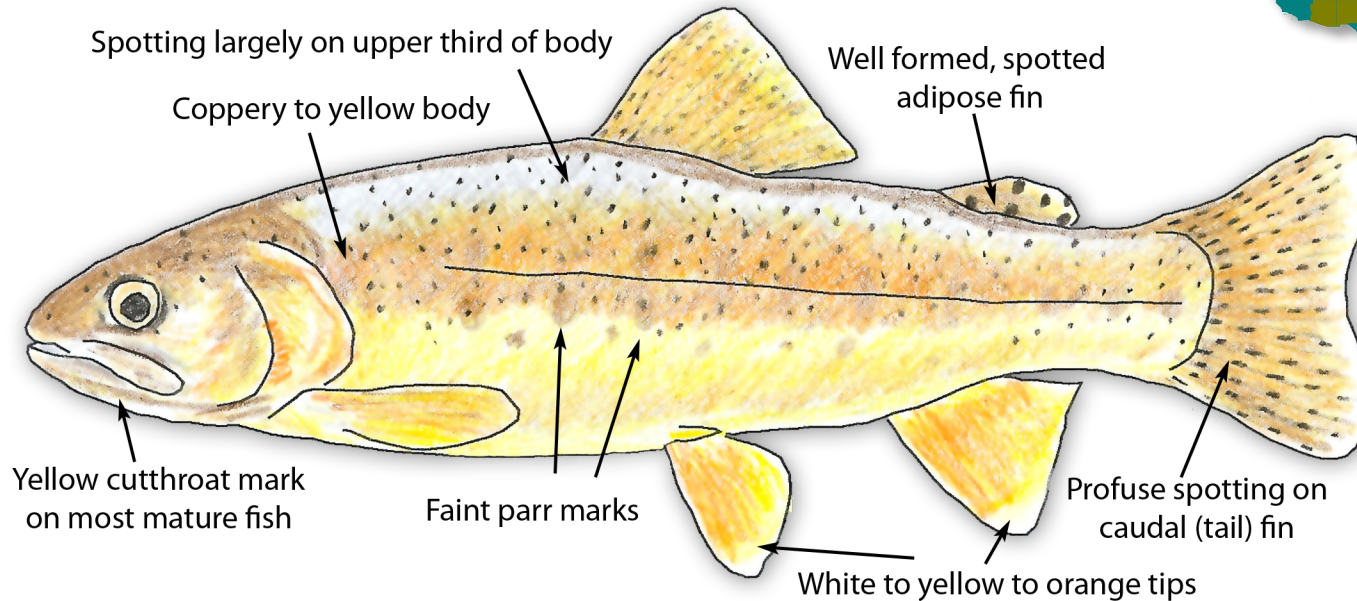
body becoming paler by the belly, with medium sized spots; a Snake River Cutt will have drabber body color and many more, smaller spots; a Westslope Cutt will generally exhibit bright but different colors, with a yellow, orange, and red body, and more, smaller spots that won't appear below the lateral line except near the tail; the Bonneville will have drabber coloration.

**RANGE** - The Greenback is the most eastern cutthroat trout. Its current range is entirely within the state of Colorado, in the Arkansas and South Platte drainages, except for a single, isolated population recently discovered in Utah, outside of the Greenback's historic range.

Check [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) for more information.



## GILA TROUT (*Oncorhynchus gilae gilae*)

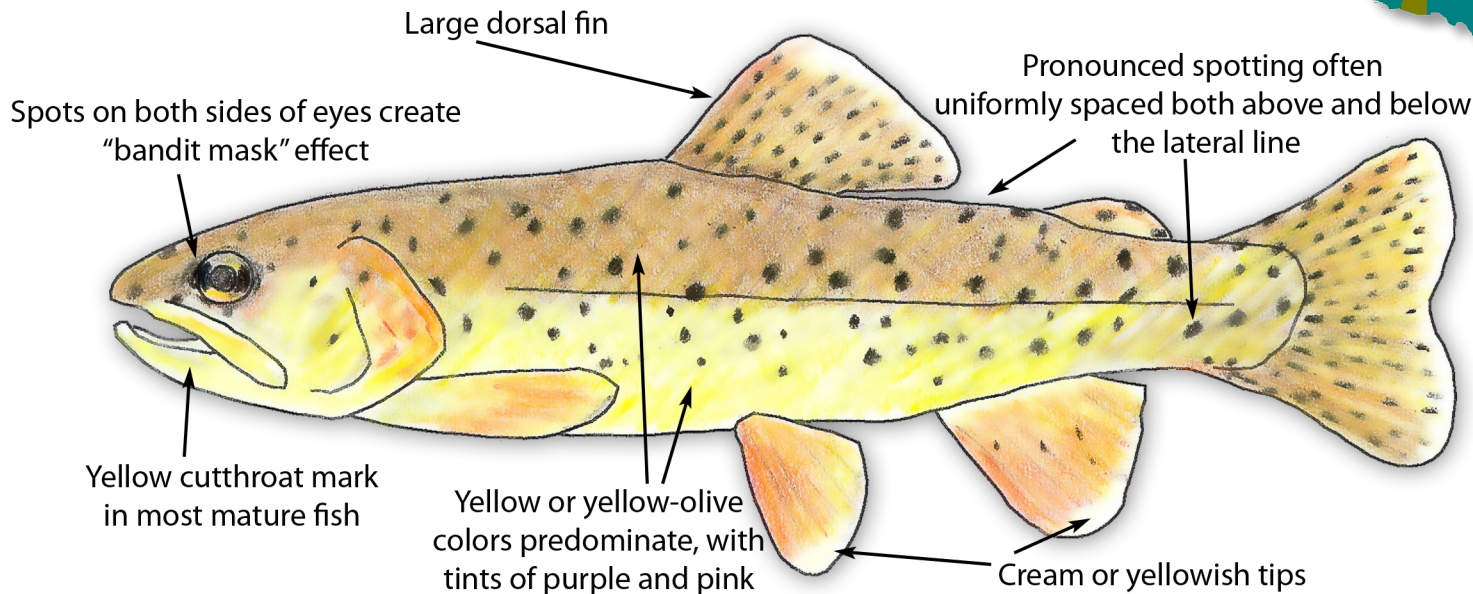


**IDENTIFICATION** - The most distinctive characteristics of the Gila Trout are its coppery to yellow body color, and spotting that is limited principally to the upper third of its body (above the lateral line), its well-formed, spotted adipose fin, and profuse spotting on its tail. Many mature fish will also exhibit a yellow cutthroat mark, and faint parr marks.

**RANGE** - *THE GILA TROUT IS A THREATENED SPECIES ACROSS ITS ENTIRE RANGE. MOST STREAMS ARE CLOSED TO ANGLING. PLEASE CHECK ARIZONA AND NM REGULATIONS BEFORE GOING OUT.*

Gila Trout today survive in a couple of dozen streams in the San Francisco, Verde, Gila, and Agua Fria River drainages in New Mexico and Arizona. On the date this was written, there are only 3 stream segments, all in New Mexico, where it is legal to fish for wild Gila Trout: Iron Creek, Mogollon Creek, and Black Canyon Creek. Note that a special permit is required, available from the NMGFD website. See [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com) and the NMGFD website for more information.

## APACHE TROUT (*Oncorhynchus gilae apache*)



**IDENTIFICATION** - The most distinctive characteristics of the Apache Trout are its yellow to yellow-olive body color which shows tints of purple and pink and its large dorsal fin. Medium sized spots cover its body fairly uniformly, both above and below the lateral line. Spots on either side of eye create a "bandit mask" effect. Pelvic and anal fins will exhibit cream or yellowish tips. Many mature fish will also exhibit a yellow cutthroat mark.

**RANGE** - Apache Trout are officially listed as a threatened species across their entire range (although the State of AZ has asked to delist them). While the state of AZ generally permits angling, much of the range is located on Indian reservations that are regulated by the tribes, not the state. In many cases these streams are closed to angling. Check before going out.

Apache Trout today survive in a couple of dozen streams in the White Mountains of east-central Arizona, roughly 135 miles east-northeast of Phoenix. See [WildTroutStreams.com](http://WildTroutStreams.com), the White Mountain Apache Tribe website, and the AZGFD website for more information.