Steelhead Trout

Sea-run Rainbow Trout | *Oncorhynchus mykiss* (Walbaum, 1792)



MIGRATION & RETURN

The silver journey *home to the river*

Steelhead begin life in British Columbia's rivers, travel into the North Pacific, then return to fresh water to spawn. Unlike other Pacific salmon, some survive spawning and may make the journey again.

SEASONAL JOURNEYS

Winter-run steelhead typically enter BC rivers from November to April; summer-run fish arrive from May to October. Both spawn in spring.

RIVER HABITAT

Cool, connected rivers with clean spawning gravel, shaded rearing streams and deep holding pools sustain steelhead across coastal and interior BC.

STEWARDSHIP MATTERS

Healthy stream flows and protected streamside forests help steelhead. COSEWIC assessed the Thompson and Chilcotin River populations as Endangered in 2020.

FIELD NOTES

RECOGNIZE IT

Look for silvery sides, a rose-pink flank, fine dark spots on the back and spots across both halves of the tail fin.

A SECOND CHANCE

Steelhead can survive spawning. Some return to sea as kelts and later migrate upstream to spawn again.

WATCH WITH CARE

Observe fish from the bank. Avoid disturbing spawners or stepping on shallow gravel that may hold buried eggs.

Sources: BC Fish & Wildlife Branch (2016); COSEWIC (2020); Pacific Salmon Foundation