

Trout Site – Cutthroat Trout

Which Subspecies was that?
By Bob Willis

If you live out west and fly-fish you will catch Cutthroat. If you fish in several different locations you will catch several different subspecies of Cutthroat. I have not caught all of Cutthroat species yet, but so far this trout ranks up there as one of my favorite. There are several reasons. All of the Cutthroat species are beautiful fish, and are good fighters. They do not jump much, but they do have a habit of ripping off line. The first Cutthroat I caught was from Estes Park Lake, Colorado when I was a teenager. I marveled at the red slash under the throat. My first big Cutthroat was from the Snake River above Jackson Lake in the Bridger-Teton National Forest of Wyoming. I caught that fish almost forty years ago, and I still have the picture. I caught it on small dry fly fishing at dark, and it put up a terrific fight. The Snake is a good-sized river at that point and the fish made several good downstream runs. That experience started my fascination with Cutthroat.



This is the largest Cutthroat I have caught (almost 7-pounds). It is a Yellowstone Cutthroat caught in Henry's Lake, Idaho.

There seems to be 14 subspecies of Cutthroat with some disagreement about the number. Some say that the Pyramid Lake Cutthroat was a separate species and is extinct. Others say that it was really a Lahontan Cutthroat (state fish of Nevada) and has been reestablished. It is generally agreed that all of the fish in Nevada are Lahontan and that the Humbolt and Whitehorse Creek Cutthroat are also the Lahontan subspecies.

I have been trying to catch all of the subspecies for over forty years and was finally able to accomplish that task in 2011. Probably the most difficult subspecies to catch is the Paiute. I am not sure that any of the Paiute waters are open to fishing at this time. A restoration effort has been under way for some time in California and some of the remaining open streams were to be closed and all fish removed so that pure Paiutes could be reintroduced.



This is Corral Valley in California and is home to Paiute Cutthroat.

I have two favorites of the Cutthroat subspecies. Westslope Cutthroat may be the most beautiful of the Cutthroat group of trout and Yellowstone Cutthroat are also pretty and live in one of the most unique places in the world.

The Cutthroat is the most widespread native trout in the United States and a joy to catch and view. It is worth the effort to find and catch them! To find out more about all of the different Cutthroat species read about the Cutthroat adventures in the book **Trout Adventures – North America**. The book/e-book will be published by Wilderness Adventures Press sometime in 2012. They specialize in fly fishing books and their website is www.wildadvpress.com.