

## Trout Site- Golden Rainbow

Golden Rainbow may be the most beautiful of all trout!  
By Bob Willis

Golden Rainbow are a hybrid form of Rainbow Trout that were developed over several years of genetic manipulation by a fish hatchery in the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources. In 1954 a single Rainbow Trout developed that was a hybrid and was half normal and half golden. By 1963 the hatchery had developed a completely golden fish and in the 1960's began stocking Golden Rainbow. They were an instant hit with anglers in the state, and the Golden Rainbow stocking program was begun.

The program was so successful in West Virginia that some of the surrounding states began acquiring fish and developed golden rainbow socking programs. Pennsylvania and Maryland have also developed Golden Rainbow stocking programs. Pennsylvania stocks about 10,000 fish each year and uses a Palomino Trout as the standard stocked fish. Palomino Trout are a hybrid that crosses a standard Rainbow with a Golden Rainbow and produces a fish that does not have quite the golden hue as the Golden Rainbow. Maryland uses the Golden Rainbow stock for the fish that they put in state waters.

Golden Rainbow do have the ability to reproduce, but don't last long outside of the hatchery environment. Almost all of the stocking is on a put and take basis. This means that most of the fish are caught in the year that they are placed in the streams and lakes. Creel studies have shown that very few Golden Rainbow are released once caught, and consequently few survive to the second and third year. They are definitely a prize and beautiful to behold.



This Golden Rainbow was almost four pounds!

The state stocking programs give you a hint as to where and when you should be fishing to catch a Golden Rain or Palomino Trout. Pennsylvania begins stocks in March and April and most of the Palomino Trout that they stock are caught by early summer. Pennsylvania does detail their stocking program, but does not identify the difference between Rainbow and Palomino stockings.

West Virginia and Maryland continue stocking throughout the year and West Virginia does have a fall stocking schedule for trout. So, where should you go if you want to catch one of these most beautiful Rainbow? It depends a lot on the experience you want while pursuing the fish. I have fished for Palomino Trout in Pennsylvania did not do well. There were many regular Rainbow but none of the yellow dandies. I was fishing in late July and I visited with one of the Pennsylvania Wildlife Agents about the Palomino stocking program while I was there. He did

tell me that the trout are stocked early in the fishing season and most are caught by early summer. I also visited whit two guides for canyoncruises.com and they said much the same thing. The fish are so visible in the water that they are able to follow them down the streams as they move from the stocking location. In lakes it is a little different and the fish do get a little more cover in the larger lakes.

I was able to find Golden Rainbow not far from where I live in Missouri. There are many trout parks in Missouri run by both the state and private parties. I found that one of the private trout parks had Golden Rainbow and spent one September days fishing for these beautiful hybrids. It was fun and I caught lots of Rainbow and one really large Golden Rainbow. It was a good day.

My next fishing trip for Golden Rainbow will be to West Virginia and I expect the experience to be a little different. There is a great deal of fishing pressure on trout fishing sites in Pennsylvania and while there is pressure in West Virginia it should not be as intense as the Pennsylvania. It was possible to find streams in Pennsylvania that were relatively isolated, but there had been a lot of rain the week before I was in the state and the water in the streams was high and it was not possible to fish any of the streams in Tioga County. Well, you could fish them, but the water was high and dirty and it was a tough show. For my money, the best bet to pick up one of these unique fish in a setting that is pretty and somewhat remote is to fish the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. The Forest has 50 per cent of all of the Trout water in the state, which is about 600 miles of cold-water streams. This water also has native brook trout as a bonus.

Golden Rainbow are not your standard fish to catch as a wild and elusive trout, but they do offer a special beauty that makes them worth finding and catching. Read the chapter on Rainbow Trout in the book or e-book **Trout Adventures – North America** to find out about all of the Rainbow subspecies and hybrids. The book/e-book will be published by Wilderness Adventures Press sometime in 2012. This publisher specializes in fly fishing books and their e-mail is [www.wildadvpress.com](http://www.wildadvpress.com).