

The Jumpingpound Creek—Some History and Stories from the Past!

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The Jumpingpound Creek—Some History of the Fishery!

The Jumpingpound Creek headwaters begin at the base of Jumpingpound Mountain, on the east side of the Fisher Mountain range, west of the City of Calgary, Alberta. The upper reach of the stream flows along the Powder Face Trail down to where it enters the foothills and pasture land to the east. The JP Creek meanders through cattle ranch country down to where it meets up with the Bow River, in the Town of Cochrane.

Historically, the JP Creek was a well known trout sport fishery in the Calgary area. Dating back to the turn of the 20th century, many anglers would fish the stream for its native population of cutthroat trout. Starting in the early 1930's, a stocking program, by the Banff Trout Hatchery, started to plant a non-native strain of cutthroat trout into the stream to replace the diminishing native population that was being depleted by over harvest. Later on in the 1930's, rainbow trout were first introduced as an alternative sport fish.

The rainbow trout soon started to reproduce in the JP stream system and prior to 1954, these trout had access to the lower Bow River in and below Calgary. Because the Highwood River system was stocked with rainbow trout at the same time as the JP, it is difficult to attribute which strain lead to the establishment of rainbow trout in the Bow River fishery! What I can say, is that the Banff Hatchery did purchase this strain of rainbow trout from a few hatcheries, south of the Canadian border, in Montana. Whether these rainbow trout had steelhead in their genetics is still a mystery!

Since the establishment of rainbow trout in the JP system and their ability to recruit new generations of trout into the Bow River, the stream has become the only spawning tributary to the Bow River, between the two power generation dams (Ghost and Bearspaw). This has added a special level of importance to the entire stream system of the Jumpingpound Creek!

1987—JP Creek Resting Pool Project

Bow Valley Habitat Development first started working on the Jumpingpound Creek in 1986. At that time, the flow levels in the JP were very low, due to a dry cycle that resulted in very little annual precipitation in the mountains to the west.

In the spring of the year, rainbow trout were forced to navigate up the JP system, from the Bow River, under very low flow, which made the spawning migration of trout vulnerable to predation and thermal temperatures that were near the upper tolerance for rainbow trout.

There were areas of the stream channel, in the lower reach of the creek, where the channel was particularly wide and shallow, with very little deep water refuge or habitat for the mature trout to rest in. These stream conditions were having a negative impact on the recruitment of new generations of rainbow trout into the Bow River and this was being reported by area anglers!

One section of the stream channel on the Wine Glass Ranch, was identified as being especially wide and shallow. BVHD determined that the creation of some pool habitats on this 2.6 kilometer reach of the creek, would benefit the fishery on both the JP and the Bow River.

BVHD contacted Bill Griffiths, the regional provincial fisheries biologist to see if a project could be put together. Bill agreed and contacted Sheldon Lowe, a well known fish habitat specialist and River Engineer. A meeting was arranged for a site inspection. After the meeting a plan for Sheldon to complete a design was made and BVHD would take care of the funding and the construction work.

Sheldon's design called for the excavation of a series of 14 resting pools, spread out over the 2.6 kilometer reach that had been chosen for the project. The project was completed in August of 1987.

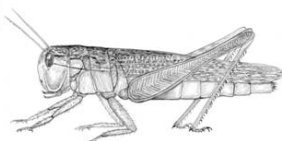
In 1993, rainbow trout were observed spawning around a few of the pool habitats!



Above: Left, Sheldon Lowe and right, Bill Griffiths, inspect the reach of the Jumpingpound Creek chosen for the resting pool project. You can see how wide the stream channel is in the background!



Above: This is a photo of one of the resting pools, three years after the project was completed. During a spawning survey of the JP Creek in 1993, rainbow trout were observed spawning adjacent to resting pool number 6 and 7. There were a total of 5 trout redds mapped around these two pools.



The JP's Importance as a Nursery Stream!

The Highwood River and the Jumpingpound Creek and their tributaries are important nursery streams for juvenile rainbow trout! The habitat and water quality is ideal for small trout as they grow through the first years of their life.

When the small trout reach an age when they are large enough to move down into the Bow River system, their chances of survival in the big water are greatly improved. It is well known to fisheries managers that these tributaries to the Bow River serve a very important role in the life cycle of river bound trout!

I have noticed over the years that in July, on the Bow River around Cochrane, large numbers of juvenile trout suddenly appear in the river. These small trout are as hungry as heck and they will hit just about any trout fly that they can get their jaws around!

This annual event usually occurs when there has been a good hatch of trout in the Jumpingpound Creek and the over crowding of fish, forces many of the small fish down into the Bow River.

It is a good idea to be as gentle as you can when releasing these small trout, because the future trout fishery is dependant on their survival. I suspect that a large number of these new recruits are flushed down into the lower Bow River as well!

Right: A photo of the author electro fishing the Jumpingpound Creek in 1994.



Above: This October photo shows a Young of the Year (YOY) rainbow trout and a larger rainbow trout from a previous hatch .



The 1992 Jumpingpound Creek Stream Channel Modification Project!

In 1992, with very little flow in the JP Creek during the spring spawning migration for Bow River rainbow trout, the majority of rainbow trout were trapped in a side channel near the mouth of the creek on the Bow River. The mature rainbow's were held up, below a series of beaver dams and they could not migrate up the creek to spawn!

BVHD teamed up with the local Jumpingpound Chapter of Trout Unlimited to take care of the situation! The side channel was dammed off and the trapped trout were netted and put back into the Bow River. The old existing stream channel was deepened so that the main volume of flow would allow trout passage up the system.



Above: This is a 1992 photo of the nearly dry main stream channel, before the project was completed. The photo was taken from a downstream position.



Above: This is a photo of the newly modified old stream channel after the project was completed.

All of the necessary permits and permissions were obtained prior to the start up on this project! It was very rewarding to have such a large group of volunteers come to the aid of the local JP Chapter of Trout Unlimited in an emergency situation that could have impacted the fishery for years to come!

TU Chapter president Darrell Downs and the executive of the group rallied within days to help make this project a success. It was a good project for the local Chapter of TU and help boost the membership over the next few years.

Members of the local Ventures and Scout Troops participated in the beaver dam removal and the fish rescue. No fish died as a result of this project! That spring's spawning was very successful and large numbers of juvenile YOY were electro fished in the fall of 1992!

BVHD obtained the necessary permits, hired a local heavy equipment operator and cover the cost of the contract work. Bow Valley Habitat Development was later paid for the costs by the JP Chapter of TU! A very good investment in the Bow River fishery!

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