

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

Cover page



The 1993 Jumpingpound Creek Trout Trapping Program!

After the 1992 JP Channel Project, near the mouth of the creek, the JP Chapter of Trout Unlimited was determined to move forward with another project to protect this spring spawning migration of rainbow trout!

At that time, there was only speculation that rainbow trout utilized the JP as a spawning tributary to the Bow River. As a result of this, there was no special regulation in place to protect the rainbow trout, as they staged in the Bow River, prior to moving up the Jumpingpound to spawn.

The JP Chapter of TU felt that it would be beneficial to conduct a trout trapping program, near the mouth of the stream, to establish once and for all, the importance of the JP Creek to the resident Bow River rainbow trout.

By completing such a program of identifying numbers of trout moving up the system in the spring, it would be easier to convince fisheries managers that special regulations for the Bow River, in the spring, would help protect this strain of trout.

In the spring of 1993, thanks to the efforts of the JP Chapter president, Darrell Downs and the executive, a trout trapping program was started on the JP Creek, just upstream of the George Fox Bridge. A consulting firm was hired to provide the equipment and expertise to make the trapping program a success.



Above: Members of the JP Chapter of Trout Unlimited construct a fish fence trap across the stream channel on the Jumpingpound Creek in 1993.

The rainbow trout that were captured at the trap site were put into a bath of anesthetic to knock them out for processing. The fish were then weighed, measured for length, and each one had a visual ID tag implanted in their adipose membrane, just behind their eye.



Above: These three rainbow trout are about to go under anaesthetic, before they are processed.



Above: A small visual tag is inserted in the milky adipose membrane, directly behind the eye of the trout. This tag will help determine the migration details of each trout that is hopefully caught later by anglers in the Bow River or downstream in the Bearsaw Dam.

A media program was later undertaken by the JP Chapter to inform as many anglers as possible, what to look for when they captured a rainbow trout, while angling in the survey area.

The trout trapping program was in operation from April 17th until May 30th of 1993. In total, 1126 rainbow trout were captured, processed and tagged, before they continued on their spawning migration upstream.

The entire 1993 JP Trout Trapping Project was a major success for the JP Chapter of Trout Unlimited. The rainbow trout of the Bow River and Bearsaw Dam would start to receive the special protection that they deserve, starting in the near future!

In 1996, thanks to pressure from the TU club and other concerned anglers, a special catch and release regulation was put in place on a small reach of the Bow River, near the mouth of the Jumpingpound Creek. This new management policy for the JP strain of rainbows would protect them while they were in a spawning migration and at the same time, provide sport angling for conservation minded anglers!

It wasn't until 2009 that special regulations were put into place for the Bearsaw Dam and the Bow River upstream. In 2009, the harvest limit for rainbow trout in this fishery was reduced to one fish under 35 cm in length. Prior to this new regulation, anglers could kill 5 mature rainbow trout per day in the Bearsaw Reservoir!



Above: This is a 1993 photo of a migrating rainbow trout that was caught in the Bow River, prior to the fish entering the Jumpingpound Creek to spawn. This female rainbow trout was released unharmed, however, at the time that it was caught it could have been killed, under the existing fishing regulations at that time!

1994 Bow River Radio Tagging and Tracking!

Once the importance of the JP Creek as a spawning tributary was established, the interest of provincial regional fisheries biologists was heightened towards learning more about this strain of rainbow trout. After all, the sudden awareness of so many mature rainbow trout migrating up the JP Creek to spawn was a real eye opener for many of us!

In 1994, members of the JP Chapter of TU assisted a provincial fisheries biologist and an ACA staff member in a radio tagging and tracking program on rainbow trout from the Bearsaw Dam and Bow River, between the Bearsaw and Ghost Dams. Small transmitters would be implanted in a number of mature rainbow trout so that their migratory movements could be documented.

A total of 14 rainbow trout were implanted with a radio transmitter. During the spring, summer and early fall, the rainbow trout movements were tracked from April 1994 until June of 1995. Most the tracking of movements of the fish, was done from an aircraft, equipped with a special antenna, attached to the wing strut.

After the tracking program was completed, a final report with all of the findings was published. The study confirmed that most of the rainbow trout wintered in the Bearsaw Reservoir.

It was interesting to note that one of the spawning trout migrated 49 km up the Jumpingpound Creek, from the mouth. It had probably traveled that far up the system to spawn.



Above: A mature rainbow trout with an implanted transmitter is about to be sutured with a few stitches!

Jumpingpound Ranchers Sign Up for "Cow and Fish Program"

From 1992 until 1995, I was habitat chairman for the JP Chapter of Trout Unlimited, based in the Town of Cochrane. In 1994, I attended the 9th International Stream Improvement Workshop, sponsored by TU Canada. I was there representing the local Cochrane Chapter and hoping to learn about some new and old proven technologies in stream enhancement that our group could put to work in our area.

The most important program (in my opinion!) presented at the conference, was the new "Cows and Fish Program" that had recently been taking root in our province. The designers of the program had created an excellent publication for distribution to land owners that had trout stream following through their properties.

The publication was in magazine form and it was titled "Caring for the Green Zone". I picked up a handful of the literature and handed them out to some of the ranchers that I knew along the Jumpingpound Creek.

The following year, Edith Wearmouth of the Wine Glass Ranch gave me a call back and express an interest in discussing the matter further, with a "Cows and Fish" representative. I contacted Allan Lock of the Fish and Wildlife office, here in Cochrane and asked him if he could help set up a meeting with Edith.

Thanks to Allan Lock, a meeting was arranged between Greg Hale of C&F and Edith Wearmouth for an introduction of what would be involved and furthermore, what could be done to enhance the riparian zone on the JP Creek. Edith was responsible for getting some of her neighbors, the major ranches on the JP, involved in the program as well!

In 1996, some of the first major landowners on the lower reach of the Jumpingpound Creek signed up for the "Cows and Fish Program". With the impacts of cattle ranching being a major contributor to the degradation of stream banks and water quality, this agreement in cooperation held tremendous promise for a substantial benefit to the state of the fishery, both present and into the future!

Since that first series of meetings, this group of ranchers has evolved into a watershed group called "Ranchers of the Jumpingpound" which has undertaken the management of the watershed and partnered into the "Jumpingpound Creek Watershed Partnership Program".

It is my hope that the fishery of the Jumpingpound Creek and its important spawning habitat will be protected into the future. With land owners playing a major role in this objective, the chances of success are very promising!



Above: This is a 1996 photo of the first "Cows and Fish Program" meeting with the major ranchers on the lower reach of the Jumpingpound.

Read more about the Jumpingpound

