



Sport fishing is of primary interest to a vast majority of the people who find recreation in the fields and forests of Idaho. Introduction of new fish species into Idaho waters may often result in harm to other species and be detrimental to fishing in general.

Why Not Introduce New Species of Fish?

BY
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Each year the Fish and Game Department receives many requests for the introduction of new species of fish or the extension of the range of other species. Most of the requests are for pike, pickerel and members of the spiny-ray fishes such as walleye and white bass.

Why does the Fish and Game Department suggest a take-it-easy program when it comes to introducing fish which are foreign to Idaho waters? A review of the introductions of exotic species of fish into Idaho waters during the past half century is enlightening and helpful in understanding the attitude of the department.

An examination of the fishes of Idaho reveals that more than 27 species have been introduced. The majority of these fishes were brought here because someone believed a particular species to be a good game and/or food fish with little or no thought given to the biological requirements of that particular species. No doubt, in their native habitats, all these fish were good game or good food fishes or both, yet when introduced into Idaho waters many have become nuisances.

The following species have been introduced into Idaho as game or food fishes:

Chum Salmon

A release of 94,000 fingerlings in Bear Lake in 1939 apparently failed. None were ever reported taken by sport fishermen but at four years of age several individuals ran up Swan Creek to spawn. Evidently they were unable to spawn successfully for none have since entered the creek.

Atlantic Salmon

Several lakes in the Sawtooth Mountains were stocked with Atlantic salmon during the 1920's. Apparently all introductions failed for none have been taken.

Brown Trout

Although it has been introduced widely throughout the State, it provides very little fishing. It has met with greatest success in the Portneuf River below Lava Hot Springs. It doesn't respond readily to an angler's lure during the daylight hours as it is principally a night feeder.

Kamloops Rainbow Trout

This trout has done best in Pend Oreille Lake. It is impossible to distinguish it from the rainbow. Introduced in 1941, it did well for several years. Recently, however, the maximum size has decreased to the point where it is now comparable to the size attained by rainbow trout in other top-quality rainbow waters.

Golden Trout

Most of the introductions of golden trout have been highly successful.

Probably the reason for this is that the persons responsible for the introduction appreciated that to do well the golden had to be planted in high mountain lakes. The first introductions were made in 1929 or 1930. The Department recently extended the range of the species in the State in order that more people could enjoy fishing for it.

Mackinaw

It was first introduced in 1898. Since that time numerous plantings have been made in several bodies of water, yet today mackinaw are found only in Priest and Bear Lakes.

Brook Trout

A native of eastern United States, the brook trout has been planted in almost every stream and a large number of lakes throughout Idaho. When the number of fish and the food supply are out of balance, it becomes stunted, often maturing at four to five inches in length. At such size, it is ignored by anglers. The end result is that that particular body of water is lost from the standpoint of angling recreation.

Lake Whitefish

A native of the Great Lakes, the lake whitefish has been introduced into Bear, Coeur d'Alene, Hayden and Pend Oreille Lakes. Apparently the introduction into all waters failed except for the releases in Pend Oreille Lake, which were at least partially

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COVER

The first messenger of winter has left a white calling card along the mountain tops north of Payette Lake.

A Good Year . . .

"The general condition of the department was never better than it is today." This statement by W. N. Stephens, state Fish and Game Warden, appears in the opening paragraph of the Second Biennial Report of the Idaho Fish and Game Department. The report was published in 1908.

These words could be repeated again forty-six years later, because they reflect the general opinion and feeling of department personnel today.

Coming to the end of 1954 gives us the opportunity to review the results of Idaho's fishing and hunting seasons for the year. At the same time we should think about, and try to understand, why this wonderful variety of wildlife is here for us to enjoy.

Actually, Idaho represents one of the last frontiers for wildlife in North America. Most of the species still are here that existed in the region before people moved in to settle the country. Populations of some have increased, and new wildlife forms have been introduced which have been successful in varying degrees.

Where else can we find elk herds like those in the Lochsa-Selway area where the population is approximately 25,000 animals? Travel further to the north and fish in Pend Oreille lake where nearly a third of a million Kokanee were taken in one month's fishing. Or the Snake River with large sturgeon. The Salmon River and its tributaries with salmon and steelhead. The forest areas with grouse, and the valleys with pheasant, quail, partridge and waterfowl.

Is this bright picture just good luck? Did it simply happen as a result of a whim of nature? Good luck and nature certainly have a part in the abundance—but it also has been aided by other factors.

It has benefited by interest and cooperation of Idaho people. People who give time and labor to further good conservation practices. The folks who ask for, and support, good wildlife management by the game department. And it has taken a lot of miles and thousands of hours in the field by our employees—the men who enforce our laws, produce our fish, and conduct research of our wildlife problems. These are the men who have worked with interest and enthusiasm year after year, many times in the face of criticism and determined opposition.

The 1954 edition of "Your Game Department" is better than ever. The efforts of trained and qualified officers, biologists and hatcherymen were correlated and streamlined when a new department organization plan was placed in effect last January. We feel that the intervening year has given us a chance to evaluate this re-organization, and to determine that it has given good results.

The entire fish and game department is united in its program of providing better hunting and fishing in Idaho. Our basic policy is the protection, perpetuation and management of our wildlife resources.

With these principles and the help of the people we can always depend upon "Good Years" for wildlife in Idaho.

ROSS LEONARD, *Director*