



# Trout Management in Victoria

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October 2004

FN0166

ISSN 1440-2254

## Recreational Value

Almost half of all angling effort in Victoria occurs on freshwater lakes, rivers and streams with trout and redfin being the two most harvested species in these waters. The Victorian trout fishery is a major social and economic contributor to regional communities with nearly half of all trout harvested annually in Australia being caught in Victoria. Inland anglers spend more than \$170 million a year pursuing trout, redfin and native species such as Murray cod and golden perch. In addition to providing good sport fishing, many consider trout to be a choice table fish.

## Stocking

Consultative meetings are held annually in five regional centres across the state to develop fish stocking plans and address other freshwater fisheries management issues. These meetings involve representatives from Fisheries Victoria, the Victorian Recreational Fishing peak body (VRFish) and other stakeholders.

Between April and November each year, the Department of Primary Industries, Fisheries Victoria releases between 300,000 and 400,000 salmonids (trout and salmon) into Victoria's public waterways to improve recreational fishing opportunities for freshwater anglers. The total weight of Departmental salmonid stockings has increased from around 30 tonnes in 2001 to more than 43 tonnes in 2004, due to the increasing proportion of salmonids released at larger sizes.

Most trout and salmon stocked by the Department are released as yearlings weighing between 80 and 100 grams each (20-25 cm in length), for put-grow-and-take fisheries. Yearling trout are close to a catchable size almost immediately upon release and recent research, such as that on Lake Purrumbete, indicates their survival rate in the wild is usually greater than that of smaller fish known as 'fingerlings'. Low numbers of larger trout are stocked during second and third term holiday periods for put-and-take fisheries in small lakes and ponds close to urban centres.

Most of the Department's salmonids are stocked into lakes and impoundments because many do not sustain adequate natural populations. Without stocking, salmonid fisheries in these waters would be severely limited or non-existent.

In many streams however, trout fisheries are based on self-sustaining wild stocks. Current research being undertaken in Victoria is confirming the long held belief that the return of stocked trout is generally minimal when they are released into a river or stream containing a self-sustaining trout population. Strong evidence from overseas indicates the practice of stocking trout into rivers and streams already supporting wild trout, may negatively affect pre-existing wild trout populations.

The primary reason why wild trout abundance may not be high in a given stream is related to the carrying capacity of that stream, which is determined by the quality of in-stream habitat and water flow. Natural variation in trout abundance will often occur between seasons as a consequence of climate induced fluctuations in stream flow and temperature.

Trout in Victorian rivers are often subjected to less than ideal conditions during summer. High water temperatures impact trout populations by restricting their distribution, inhibiting their growth and even causing mortality in extreme cases. Increased flows help buffer against stream temperature changes, however, natural events such as drought have an uncontrollable negative effect on stream flow, habitat and in turn, trout quality and abundance.

## Departmental Salmonid Stocking

Year	Brown trout	Rainbow trout	Chinook salmon	Atlantic salmon	Total
1999	230,925	104,275	11,200	0	346,400
2000	265,915	112,460	2,500	5,300	386,175
2001	160,821	165,927	6,839	0	333,587
2002	154,447	160,367	0	15,000	329,814
2003	195,290	121,911	9,750	5,000	331,951

The 2004 salmonid stocking program is still underway although it is anticipated that approximately 385,000 trout and salmon will be released this year.

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