Common trout species in Oregon

Rainbow
Rainbows are the most widely stocked and distributed trout in Oregon. They occur naturally in many rivers and streams and are stocked in ponds and lakes. They are highly variable in color, often silvery, with light pink to red stripe along sides. The can reach up to 30 inches in length. Rainbow trout prefer cold, clear water and are most often found in water 45-60 degrees Fahrenheit. Their diet consists of minnows, crayfish, insects, and other small aquatic life, making them susceptible to a well-presented spinner, flatfish or fly.

Redband Rainbow
Redbands are a subspecies of rainbow trout indigenous to Central Oregon and adapted to the arid conditions east of the Cascades. Redband trout inhabit cool streams and rivers as well as some lakes, and they can grow up to 18-inches long.

Brown
These nonnative trout, introduced in the U.S. in 1883, have a reputation for being wily and elusive. While they prefer cold spring-fed rivers and streams, and lakes with cold water inlets, brown trout also can be more tolerant of warmer streams and lakes. These trout can range in size from 11-inches long in small streams up to 30 inches in larger rivers and lakes. While brown trout have a varied diet, anglers targeting large brown trout often use spinners or flies that mimic minnows.

Cutthroat
Cutthroat trout get their name from the red-oranges slashes on the underside of the lower jaw. The most common variety available to most anglers is the coastal cutthroat found in many streams and beaver ponds in coastal drainages. Trout that remain in the stream year round may not get any bigger than 8- or 9-inches long but reward the angler with an aggressive bite and enthusiastic fight. The sea-run strain that travels to saltwater to feed may reach an impressive 17 inches.

Brook
Brook trout are an introduced fish species that were first stocked in the early 1900s. While technically not a trout (they are a member of the char family), their life history, ecology and habitat are similar to brown and rainbow trout. Brook trout are widely distributed from high mountain lakes to headwater tributaries. They are the most prevalent game fish in both wildness and non-wilderness high lakes. In small streams and high lakes, brook trout are typically small – 5- to 7-inches long. In larger streams and rivers they can reach more than 25 inches.

Because insect larvae and nymphs make up a large part of their diet, they are a favorite target of fly fishers who use flies mimicking these insects. However, these aggressive biters will also go after a variety of other baits and lures.

Where and when to fish
Trout are widely distributed and can be found in almost any water body that provides:

- cool, clean water
- food such as aquatic insects, minnows and crayfish
- cover and protection from predators

Trout habitats are often divided into lakes and ponds (stillwaters) or rivers and streams (moving waters). Fish location, behavior and fishing tactics will vary depending on whether you’re fishing in stillwaters or moving waters.

Finding trout in lakes and ponds
In stillwaters trout are on the move, “cruising” the water looking for food. At the same time, trout don’t want to get too far away from cover that offers protection from predators. Some likely places to look for trout in lakes and ponds include:

- near or above aquatic vegetation
- around logs, stumps, rocks or other structure
- at stream inlets where streams flowing into the lake or pond are bringing cool fresh water and a likely supply of food
- deeper waters especially in the warm summer months when trout are looking for cooler water as well as protection from overhead predators

Finding trout in rivers and streams
In moving waters, trout tend to hold in one spot and wait for the water current to bring food to them. A primary food source for these fish is aquatic insects adrift in the current. In addition to looking for food and protection from predators, trout in moving waters are also looking for a place to rest from the current. Some likely places to look for trout in rivers and streams include:

- behind rocks or other structure
- HINT: Look for water where the surface is textured with bumps or ripples, which are often created as water flows over rocks and boulders on the river bed
- near steep or undercut banks
- in deeper, slower pools

Anglers can experience a lifetime of varied and rewarding adventures fishing for trout in Oregon’s shaded coastal streams, alpine lakes, urban ponds and high desert rivers.

http://www.dfw.state.or.us

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Trout Fishing
Most rivers and streams fish best in the spring and fall when water temperatures are cooler. Very few rivers and streams are stocked, so you’ll be fishing for naturally reproducing or wild fish. As the water gets warmer, look for trout in faster riffles where the water gets re-oxygenated as it tumbles over rocks. Some rivers, especially in Central Oregon, are open for trout year round. Fishing can be good in the winter months – for hardy anglers willing to brave the cold and snow – but look for trout in slow, calm waters where they don’t have to fight the current.

**Tackle for trout fishing**

The list of necessary trout fishing gear and equipment can be very simple. A rod and reel, and a small selection of lures, bait hooks, bobbers and artificial bait is enough to go fishing just about anywhere you might find trout. A good shopping list to get started might include:

- A lightweight 6-foot spincasting or spinning rod with matching reel and 4-6 pound mono filament line
- A handful of 1/16 oz. spinners
- Package of size 8 bait hooks
- Couple of red/white bobbers
- Jar of PowerBait or PowerEggs
- A package of #5 lead split shot
- Worms

Fly fishing is another popular way to fish for trout. It requires more specialized equipment and tools, but a good starter outfit could include:

- Graphite 5-weight fly rod, 9 feet long
- Weight forward, 5-weight fly line
- Tapered monofilament leaders, 4X 7.5 feet long
- Spoons of 4X and 5X tippet
- Assorted streamside tools
- Files

**Fishing techniques for lakes and ponds**

There are lots (and lots) of ways to fish for trout, but three of the easiest ways to fish for trout in lakes are:

- **Suspending bait under a bobber.** Start with a piece of worm or a little PowerBait or similar product on a bait hook. Attach a small lead weight just above the hook to help the bait sink, and add a bobber 1 ½ to 3 feet above the hook. Cast out to likely spot and wait for the bobber to wiggle, dive or jerk. This is a good technique when fish are cruising nearer the surface or when you want to keep your bait and hook suspended above a weed bed.
- **Fishing with bait off the bottom.** Sometimes trout are in deeper water and the bait needs to be down deep where the fish are. In this technique there is no bobber to suspend the bait. Instead the lead weight is attached about 1 ½ foot above the baited hook and cast out. The lead weight will sink, but the bait will float up and hover 1 ½ above the bottom of the lake.
- **Retrieving a spinner, spoon or fly.** Spiners mimic small minnows, leeches and other favorite trout food. When fishing a spinner or spoon, cast it over likely looking water. Let it sink for a minute then begin reeling it in (retrieving). Vary the amount of time you let the spinner sink and the speed of the retrieve until you find the combination that catches fish.

However, most trout in rivers and streams are wild fish that reproduce naturally. Some anglers prefer to release these fish so they can be caught again, or perhaps reproduce. In a handful of rivers and lakes, catch-and-release fishing is required. If you’re going to release the fish you catch, here are some tips for doing it safely:

- Use barbless hooks.
- Land the fish quickly, before it tires too much.
- Wet your hands before handling the fish, and try not to remove it from the water.
- If you’re going to take a photo, have the camera set and the scene composed before lifting the fish out of the water and quickly taking the picture.
- Use needle-nosed pliers or hemostats to remove the hook. If the hook is deeply imbedded, cut the leader near the hook, which will rust away after a few days.
- Revive the fish in the current before letting it go.

Five pointers for tying better knots:

1) **Learn to tie a few simple knots well.** There are dozens of knots for the angler. They publish whole books with nothing but pictures of how to tie knots. But start with just three knots, and learn how to tie them really well. Some good choices are:
   - Improved clinch knot – to tied the hook to the line
   - Surgeon’s knot – to tie two lines together
   - Palomar knot – another knot to tie the hook to the line
2) **Make sure you know how to tighten every knot properly.** Knots break when they slip, and they slip if they aren’t properly tightened. Pull on all the lines going into or coming out of the knot. Tighten both the short tag ends and the longer standing lines.
3) **Just before you tighten the knot, moisten it with saliva.** This little bit of moisture does two things: it helps the knot hold or fully tighten, it also reduces friction heat that can cause the leader or tippet to stretch and weaken.
4) **Test each knot before you make that first cast.** Give the line a few healthy tugs. Wrap the bend of the hook around a ring (the finger holes of your hemostat, a d-ring on your vest, etc.) and tug on the tippet to make sure the knot is secure.
5) **Practice tying knots.** Most people either laugh or groan at the thought of practicing knots. But standing on the shore with fish jumping all around you is a terrible place to try to remember how to tie a clinch knot. It’s not like you have to practice every day – you’re not learning a musical instrument. But grab a bit of line and some hooks, and tie a few favorite knots over and over again. Do this a couple of times and you’ll be pleased with how easily it comes back to you when you’re on the water.

For more information about trout fishing in Oregon, check out the ODFW Web site at www.dfw.state.or.us. There you can buy a license, check out the Sport Fishing Regulations, see the Trout Stocking Schedule and get an update on current fishing conditions with the weekly Recreation Report, which includes fishing updates on almost 200 rivers, stream, lakes, reservoirs and ponds throughout the state.

**Fishing for trout in Oregon**

*Three knots to know*

**Improved Clinch Knot**

An old standby known as the fisherman’s knot.

**Surgeon’s Knot**

Used to tie two lines (one short) together.

**Palomar Knot**

The easiest to tie, a good choice to hold terminal tackle (hooks, swivels and lures).