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Trout stocking provides fishing fun, fillets!

Area waterways take in 70,000 rainbows in May

By DENVER BROWN Sports Editor

Bright yellow, red and blue parks lined the rocks of the Grayson Lake tailwaters, recently, and several shades of green or orange tackle boxes balanced on rocks just out of the rapidly moving water. But an even more brilliant spectrum of color zigged and zagged and poked butts just below the surface.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife stocked rainbow trout into the Carter County spillway two weeks ago and the resulting catches have been quite colorful - and plentiful. The Water Creek Hatchery provided the 1,500 rainbows that were released into the tailwaters. And nearly two-dozen anglers were on hand the first day to try their luck.

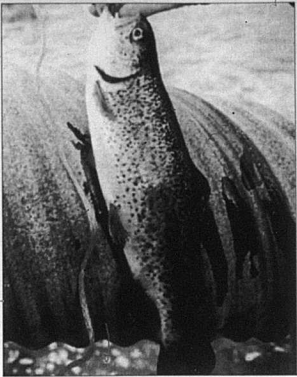
"Stocking trout in here makes it easy for people to catch 'em," said Grayson sixth-grader Josh Lawhorn. "They're a lot of fun to catch, especially the bigger ones." Lawhorn and his family hauled in their limit in less than an hour.

And the fish seem to cooperate at least the first few hours following their release. To make the several-hundred-mile trip, the fish aren't fed for three days prior to being loaded on the tanker truck. Once they're stocked through the valve of the truck, down the 75-foot steel pipe and into their new homes, they're gassy. On this particular day in Grayson, folks were trying corn, minnows, an assortment of jigs and spinners, and even worms - and all seemed to do the trick. A tricky trip down the jagged rocks saw several of the brightly-colored gamefish coming to the net.

With the recent heavy rains and flooding, the tailwaters at Grayson were up and moving. Extremely fast, that and cool temperatures make for ideal trout water. For the month of May, the state and federal departments have plans to stock more than 70,000 trout in area waterways similar to this one. The Licking River off Cave Run Lake in Bath County receives regular shipments as does Triplett Creek in Morehead and Paintsville Lake, just below the dam, in Johnson County.

The success of the "put-and-take" program has exploded in popularity in recent years. Anglers purchase a separate trout stamp with their fishing license and the additional funds go directly to maintaining the trout stocking operations.

"We started out this morning at 7 a.m. with 7,000 fish," Mark Roberts of the Elkhorn Fishery Station said as he and partner Charlie Goodrich take a breather following the 350-mile trip. "That's been a big day for us."



Denver Brown photo

A keeper-sized rainbow trout shows off its brilliant colors. More than 70,000 of the colorful gamefish will be stocked into area waterways in the month of May. A trout stamp, in addition to a regular fishing license, is needed to keep trout but the fee helps insure the success of the put-and-take program.

All of the fish stocked in the state of Kentucky go through our section. We do all of the hauling - alone, that's 1,600,000 in one year across the state - that's a lot of trout," Roberts said as another of the silver-sided acrobats comes out of the water and into the net - after just five minutes of freedom.

The trout released on this chilly, overcast April afternoon were in the 12" to 14"-inch range - that size makes fine filleting and cooking.

"They enjoy eating 'em, I guess, and the sport," Goodrich said. "And the fish travel well, too. We have very little trouble with 'em on the trucks. Once we dump, they're ready to bite."

The trout get into the water in a variety of ways: hand-carried five-gallon buckets, back packs, buses, or like in Grayson through the "trout tunnel."

The large number of freshly-stocked trout readily taking just about anything reworking bait made for pleasant dispositions this day. Even the continuous tangling with the angler next door didn't seem to bother this bunch. They had more important things to do - reel in this good-looking rainbows!

"I really enjoy catching them," Jacob Deel of Earsland said as he set the hook on his eighth, and limiting-out, trout.

"The ones I keep, I fry. They're more fun to catch, to me. I'd rather eat crappie but trout are fun to catch. And I'll have these for supper."
Deel held a bright red stringer straining under the weight of those pound-each trout. Some have darker stripes of red or purple and flasher of silver. All have dark spots. Fishing with Deel, Ira Adkins of Greenup holds up a similar haul.

Even fishermen who usually go after different quarry have ventured out to the trout-filled rapid action. Ashland Technical College student Tom Rose made the drive over after classes to try his luck.

"I'm a bass fisherman, so I don't mess around when I set the hook," Rose said after a missed hook-up that sent the lure whizzing out of the water and passed his ear. "But they're fun to catch."
Even the media got into the act, in between snapping photographs and jotting down observations, this reporter used Deel's rod and reel and landed three "keeper" trout.

Scenes like this play out on rocky banks and swift water across the area this time of year. The trout provide plenty of tackle-busting action (and they're pretty, too!) for the whole family. For the latest information on trout stocking in your area, contact the Frankfort office at 1-800-858-1549 or call the Minor Clark Fish Hatchery at 606-784-6582.

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