



## Bull Trout

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) staff is using a drone to assess the effects of low water flows on bull trout movement and migration within the Yakima and Naches River basins. This work will alert biologists when they need to undertake fish rescue efforts for the species, which is listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act, as low water conditions develop and create barriers to fish passage.

Drone flights will take place over the lower reaches of tributary streams and follow those streams to U.S. Bureau of Reclamation reservoirs within the Yakima and Naches River basins.

In Shopper Country, the primary waters where Bull trout may be found are **Clear Lake and Rimrock Lake and the creeks feeding into them.**

A more complete list:

### Eastside

- [Bumping Lake](#)
- [Bumping Lake2](#)
- [Clear Lake \(Yakima County\)](#)
- [Rimrock Lake](#)
- [Rimrock Lake2](#)

### Westside

- [Swift Reservoir](#)
- [Yale Reservoir](#)
- [Lake Merwin](#)
- [Lake Merwin2](#)

Bull trout must never be fished for as they are a Threatened Species, fishing for them in most waters is prohibited, and big fines such as \$1,000 or more are charged against anyone who fishes for them or possesses one. A recent Oregon angler caught with Bull Trout was sentenced to **three years federal probation, a \$1,000 fine, 40 hours of community service, and three-year fishing ban.**

The bull trout is a char of the family Salmonidae native to northwestern North America. Historically, *S. confluentus* has been known as the "Dolly Varden" but was reclassified as a separate species in 1980. Bull trout are listed as a threatened species under the U.S. Endangered Species Act.

If you see this species, please share your observation using the [WDFW wildlife reporting form](#). Providing detailed information such as a photo and exact coordinates will improve the confidence and value of this observation to WDFW species conservation and management.

**COME LEARN ABOUT BULL TROUT, an extremely large yet largely unknown but very protected native fish that comes out at night. A fun family event that you don't want to miss! WHERE: Clear Lake Campground Picnic Area east of White Pass. WHEN: 11 a.m. every Saturday in July and August.**

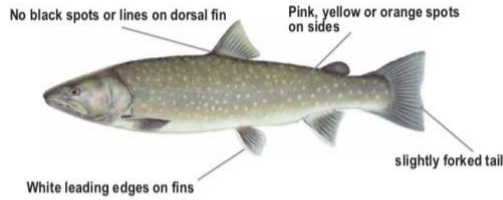
Bull trout can be exceptionally easy to catch, can sometimes be grabbed by hand in shallow creeks. Campers unaware that Bull trout are strongly protected have been found illegally gathering many of the big fish by hand at night in a creek near the campsite and feasting on them.

Remember, when handling any fish you intend to release, wet your hands first so you don't take off the fish's protective slippery coating. Dry hands will remove the protective coating and make the fish vulnerable to bacterial or fungal infections, which can kill them.

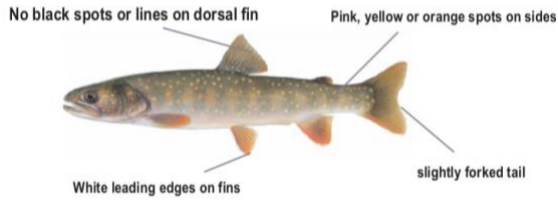
Even though bull trout are classified as a game fish in Washington, most of their populations across the state are listed as "threatened" by the federal Endangered Species Act and therefore they cannot be fished for or kept if accidentally caught while fishing.

## Bull Trout Identification Guide

Adult Bull Trout with characteristics typical of fish from a lake and lengths generally greater than 20 inches.



Juvenile Bull Trout with characteristics typical of stream fish and lengths generally less than 20 inches.



**Please Note:** Anglers that fail to properly validate their Bull Trout catch card, exceed the specified limits, violate the season restrictions, or possess a dead Bull Trout without a properly validated catch card, will be in violation of Montana fishing regulations and may also be prosecuted for violation of the Endangered Species Act.

If an angler catches a bull trout in a water closed for bull trout fishing, they must not be taken out of the water, but de-hooked and immediately released.

Even though they are called a trout, bull trout are actually char, closely related to lake trout and brook trout rather than rainbow or cutthroat trout. Also, like lake trout and brook trout their most obvious distinctive feature is light spots on a dark background, unlike rainbow and cutthroat that have dark spots on a lighter background.

If an angler is fishing in waters containing bull trout, it is his or her responsibility to be able to identify bull trout and release them immediately, unharmed, if one is accidentally caught on hook and line. Their back and sides are olive-green with pale spots about the size of the pupil of their eye. The head and mouth are unusually large, and their ventral fins have white leading edges.

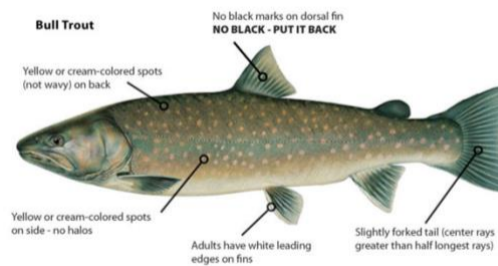
Bull trout have different life histories that can vary by individual population. Some spend their entire lives in small streams and their size remains small. Some migrate from small streams to larger rivers and back again to the stream to spawn. Those fish are generally larger. Some migrate into lakes or reservoirs then back to their natal stream or river to spawn. The varying life histories have an influence on maximum size, from 10 to 12 inches to over 30 inches and many pounds in weight.

**When in doubt, it is always safest to release a fish that might be a bull trout.**

The quickest and easiest way to identify a bull trout is by the dorsal fin.

If there is:

**NO BLACK - PUT IT BACK.**



This species is identified as a **Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)** under the [State Wildlife Action Plan \(SWAP\)](#). SGCN-classified species include both those with and without legal protection status as well as game species with low populations.

**Read this week's Bible Readings on page 6** which includes apostolic encouragement to Hebrews who had converted to Christianity: **"...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."** Hebrews 12:1 NIV

Dave Bunting, Aug. 8, 2022  
Credits in links below items.  
See these columns on my blog [daverant.com](#)

