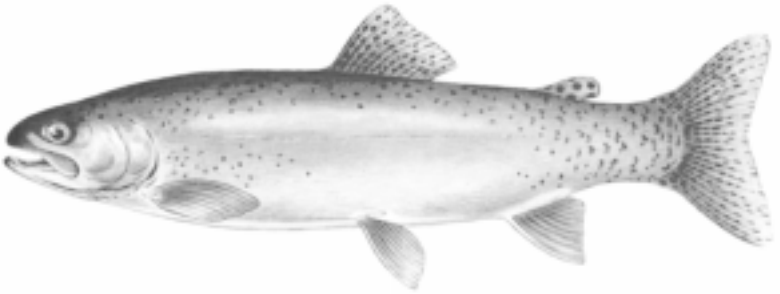


## EAGLE LAKE RAINBOW TROUT

*Salmo gairdnerii aquilarum*



### DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

*Male at spawning time:* In describing the Eagle Lake trout, J. O. Snyder stated: "Body above and down the sides nearly to the lateral line is a rich dark olive, each scale brassy and very conspicuous. The sides below the olive region and the ventral surface are deep coppery-red with bright metallic reflections. The sides of the head are cherry-red, very rich in color. A trace of red beneath the mandible; iris brassy. The pectorals are broadly and conspicuously edged with olive."

There are very few black spots on the head. The middle of the back from the head to the dorsal fin is without spots. The dorsal and caudal fins and the upper part of the body have large rounded or elongated spots.

*Female at spawning time:* (Again, from description by Snyder.) "It is light olive above where each scale is silvery with greenish reflections. The sides are lighter, the scales more green than those above, the ventral surface silvery, tinted with pink. A very distinct pale reddish stripe extends along the side of the body, mostly below the lateral line. The cheeks and opercles are red, the iris orange. The ventrals and anal are suffused with red and distinctly edged with the same."

### DISTRIBUTION IN CALIFORNIA

Originally this trout occurred only in Eagle Lake, Lassen County, and its tributary, Pine Creek. In recent years it has been transplanted to several waters in Lassen and Modoc counties.

### INTERESTING FACTS

Eagle Lake lies within the Lahontan system, a drainage area of the Great Basin of North America with a number of fishes of unusual interest. However, the lake and its tributary, Pine Creek, are only a few miles distant from the Sacramento River drainage and there has been considerable speculation whether the Eagle Lake trout is more closely related to the cutthroats

of the Lahontan drainage or the rainbows of the coastal watersheds. The anatomical characteristics of this trout appear to be more like those of a rainbow and so it is here classed with the rainbow series.

The highly alkaline water of Eagle Lake, which has no outlet, makes it unsuitable for most kinds of fishes. In addition, it is heavily populated by tui chubs, which probably compete seriously for food with the young trout.

The only place in which Eagle Lake trout can spawn naturally is Pine Creek. Gradual lowering of the lake level over the years has often made access to this small stream difficult for spawning fish. Besides, flows in it are uncertain, lessening survival chances for the young trout. The species has now been rescued from this precarious existence by establishing a trapping station and spawning facilities at the mouth of Pine Creek, and maintaining brood stock at Crystal Lake Hatchery. The mature fish are spawned artificially and the young are reared at state hatcheries.

J. O. Snyder described this trout in 1917, naming it *aquilarum*, after the Latin name for eagle.



Eagle Lake, Lassen County, home of the Eagle Lake rainbow trout. This is one of the larger natural lakes of California, with a surface area of about 22,000 acres, it lies at an elevation of 5,700 feet. Note the typical vegetation of aspen, sagebrush, and conifers.