



Lake Estes

FISH SURVEY AND MANAGEMENT DATA

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General Information: Construction on the Olympus Dam, which ultimately formed Lake Estes (185 acres), began in the summer of 1947. Two years later the reservoir filled and Estes Lake has remained a popular recreation destination ever since. Anglers at Estes Lake will primarily catch rainbow and brown trout. Thousands of 10-12" rainbows are stocked each year in the lake for the angling enjoyment of locals and those visiting the area. These fish are stocked with the intention anglers will keep a few for dinner.

Location: From Loveland, follow Highway 34 west to the Big Thompson Canyon approximately 30 miles west of Highway 287.

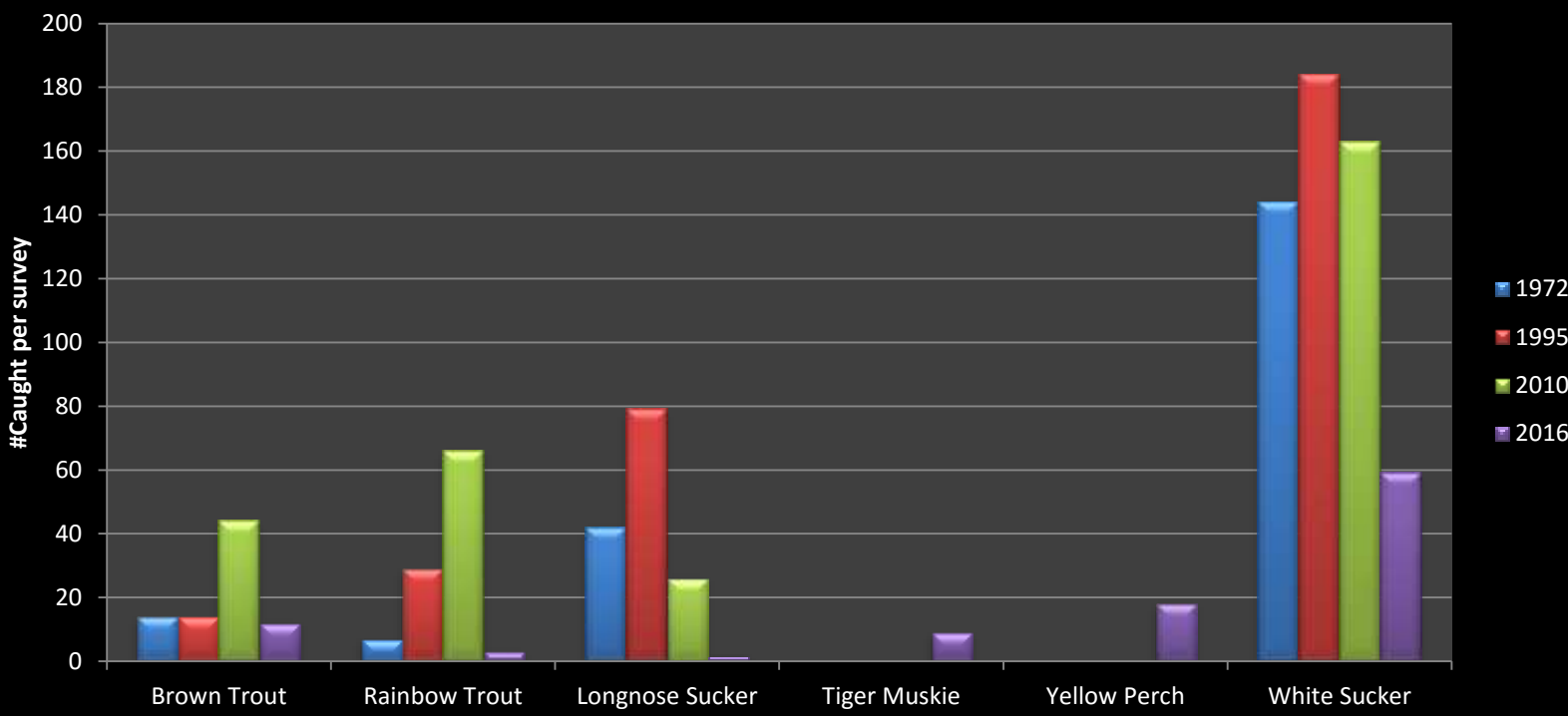
Purchase a Fishing License: <https://www.co.wildlifelicense.com/start.php>

Fishery Management: Coldwater angling

<u>Amenities</u>	<u>Previous Stocking</u>	<u>Sportfishing Notes</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Marina •Boat/kayak rentals •Boat ramp •Restrooms •Walking trails •Elk viewing 	<p><u>2016</u> Splake Trout (Lake x Brook Hybrid) Rainbow Trout</p> <p><u>2015</u> Tiger Muskie Tiger Trout Rainbow Trout</p> <p><u>2014</u> Rainbow Trout Hofer Strain Rainbow Tiger Muskie</p> <p><u>2013</u> Rainbow Trout Hofer Strain Rainbow Tiger Muskie</p> <p><u>2011</u> Rainbow Trout Hofer Strain Rainbow</p> <p><u>2010</u> Rainbow Trout Hofer Strain Rainbow Kokanee Salmon Native Cutthroat Trout</p>	<p><u>Rainbow Trout</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Spinners, bait (powerbait & nightcrawlers), and flies are all productive tools. Fishing is typically good to great from May through October. Boat anglers do well trolling small rapalas (black & chartreuse). <p>•At times the rainbows are so aggressive they often deep hook themselves while attacking bait. Anglers who encounter a deep hooked trout are highly encouraged to keep these fish. Trout hooked in this fashion will not survive.</p> <p><u>Brown Trout</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Flies and lures work best for anglers targeting browns. The browns are easily spooked in Estes Lake so early morning fishing is much better. <p><u>Tiger Muskie</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •A small population of tiger muskie roam Estes Lake. These fish are stocked to reduce sucker and perch populations. Large lures might attract one.
<u>Regulations</u>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Daily trout limit is 4 (rainbow, brown, or combination). See regulation brochure for more information. •Tiger muskie must be 36" to keep. The limit is 1. •Use of live fish as bait is prohibited. 		

2016 Gillnet Species Sampled	# of Fish	% of Total	Average Length (Range) inches	Average Weight (lb)
Longnose Sucker	2	1.94%	6.6 (6-7)	0.12
Brown Trout	12	11.65%	12 (10-13)	0.57
Rainbow Trout	3	2.91%	10.84 (9-12)	0.61
White Sucker	59	57.28%	15.4 (8-20)	2.84
Tiger Muskie	9	8.74%	19.7 (13-27)	4.23
Yellow Perch	18	17.48%	6.8 (4-9)	0.36

Above: The summary of the 2016 survey for Estes Lake using 2 gillnets and 4 trap nets set overnight. The number of trout sampled has declined a likely result of "flushing" the reservoir during the September, 2013 floods. Estes will rebound quickly as 22,000 ten-inch trout will be stocked during 2015 and 2016.



Above: The chart above depicts the various species surveyed in lake Estes in 1972, 1995, 2010, and 2016. Each survey was completed by deploying gillnets and trap nets. Brown and rainbow trout have substantially increased, in part due to advances in fish production and our ability to raise and transfer more catchable trout relative to 1972. However, numbers of trout numbers were down considerably based on the 2016 survey. Managing the fishery is not an easy balance because management includes what can escape into the Big Thompson River. Thus artificially stocking more predatory brown trout could offset or reduce a naturally reproducing population of rainbow trout in the river. As a result CPW began stocking sterile predators including splake, tiger trout, and tiger muskie. The results indicate the sucker numbers are declining but rainbow predation may also be in play. Approximately 22,000 10 inch rainbow trout are stocked into Estes Lake, this will continue however, numbers of tiger muskie will be reduced.

Water Name: Estes Lake	Year: 2009 (6/1 – 8/31)		Estimates		
Report All Species	Shore Anglers	Boat Anglers	All		
TOTAL ANGLER HOURS	31,329	2,479	33,808		
TOTAL # ANGLERS	12,550	1,972	13,310		
TOTAL CATCH (Trout, Walleye, Perch, Tiger Muskie)	19,213	2,889	22,102		
KEPT CATCH	10,281	838	11,118		
RETURNED CATCH	8,932	2,051	10,983		
TOTAL CATCH/HR	0.63	1.32	0.67		
KEPT CATCH/HR	0.34	0.33	0.33		
RETURN CATCH/HR	0.3	0.99	0.34		
AVERAGE COMPLETED TRIP LENGTH	2.8	2.9	2.8		
AVERAGE FISH LENGTH (INCH)	10.6	11.1	10.6		

Water Name: Estes Lake	Estimates		
Report Rainbow Trout Only	Shore Anglers	Boat Anglers	All
TOTAL CATCH (RAINBOW TROUT)	18,152	2,656	20,807
KEPT CATCH	9,963	829	10,792
RETURNED CATCH	8,185	1,827	10,012
TOTAL CATCH/HR	0.6	1.1	1.7
KEPT CATCH/HR	0.3	0.3	0.7
RETURN CATCH/HR	0.3	0.7	1.0
AVERAGE FISH LENGTH (INCH)	10.6	11.1	10.6

To learn more about creel surveys go here: <http://wildlife.state.co.us/Fishing/Reports/ManagementandSurveys/>

Based solely on information provided by anglers fishing Lake Estes, 20,807 rainbow trout were caught between June 1 and August 31, 2009 with slightly more than half of these fish being harvested. This information validates our current stocking rate of roughly 20,000 rainbow trout stocked annually. If you have any questions send me an email. A total of 13,310 anglers visited Lake Estes with most fishing from shore. In addition to rainbow trout, anglers also caught an estimated 878 brown trout, 258 yellow perch, 51 tiger muskie, and 9 walleye.

Based on information collected from the creel survey approximately 22,000 rainbow trout will be stocked in Estes Lake each year at 10-inches to meet fishing demands. I encourage anglers to keep rainbow trout for table fare (daily bag is 4 trout). Tiger muskie at 7-9 inches will also be stocked in order to reduce the sucker population and add an additional component to the fishery. Tiger muskie must be 36 inches to keep.

Kokanee Salmon: Despite stocking 214,076 kokanee salmon (2.03") since 2001, neither the creel nor semi-annual fishery surveys have detected this species. A reliable angler report from 2009 did uncover a small number caught, but in large part kokanee salmon are apparently not suited for this reservoir. Accordingly, kokanee are no longer to be stocked in Lake Estes.

Future Management: The 2010 gillnet survey revealed a much more robust sucker population than I had expected. In the past, walleye were introduced but have failed to reach a preferable predatory size to target the large sucker population. Stocking saugeye is not an option as Estes Lake is directly connected to Carter Lake which serves as a brood lake for pure walleye. Hence, saugeye could potentially taint Carter Lake which only contains pure walleye. Other predatory species

A Rocky Mountain cow elk wading in Lake Estes. The historic Stanley Hotel is pictured in the background.

