

# Fish in the Deschutes Basin



## Fish attributes



Anadromous



Freshwater



Wild



Hatchery

## Sockeye



Silver in color when in the ocean

Red body with green head during spawning season

**Adult migration season (at Pelton trap):**  
July – Oct.; Aug. peak

- Sockeye salmon were historically present in the Metolius River Basin.
- As part of the reintroduction effort, migrating juveniles are collected at the Selective Water Withdrawal and passed downstream for part of the year.

## Kokanee



Silver in color; turning reddish during spawning season

Similar in appearance to sockeye but significantly smaller

- Kokanee, sometimes called “landlocked sockeye,” are the same species as sockeye but exhibit a different life history. Kokanee do not migrate to the ocean but remain in freshwater rivers and lakes throughout their lifetime.

- Lake Billy Chinook and the Metolius River support a thriving population of kokanee.

## Summer steelhead



Silver in color when in the ocean

Green, silver-white and pink with speckles when in freshwater

**Adult migration season (at Pelton trap):**  
Sept. – April; Peak in winter, month varies depending on year

- The Deschutes supports a healthy population of summer steelhead. Adults return to freshwater after one or two years in the ocean.
- Deschutes steelhead remain in the main river throughout the summer, providing abundant opportunities for anglers.
- As part of the reintroduction effort, migrating juveniles are collected at the Selective Water Withdrawal and passed downstream for part of the year.

## Redband trout



Rosy red stripes along sides

- Redband trout are the non-anadromous counterpart of steelhead and the desert variety of rainbow trout (all three are the species *O. mykiss*).

- The Deschutes Basin boasts a world class redband trout fishery, popular with anglers.

## Spring Chinook



Reddish belly and fins during spawning season, purplish back with silvery sides and belly when in the ocean

Largest salmon species in the Pacific Northwest; large black spots on the back and round spots on both lobes of the tail, dark mouth with black gum line

**Adult migration season (at Pelton trap):**  
May – Sept.; June peak

- Spring Chinook enter the Deschutes River in April and May, ascending rapidly upstream. The run peaks at Sherars Falls, where approximately 30% of the fish are caught by both sport fisherman and Native Americans from the Warm Springs Reservation using traditional dip nets.
- Spring Chinook historically spawned in both the upper Warm Springs and upper Metolius Rivers. With the failure of downstream passage in the 1960s, the portion of the run produced in the Metolius River was transferred to the hatchery. This hatchery is now being used to supply fish for reintroduction as well as lower river anglers.

## Fall Chinook



Similar in appearance to spring chinook, returning from the ocean later in the summer and fall

**Adult migration season (at Pelton trap):**  
Sept. – Dec.; Nov. and Dec. peak

- The Deschutes River is home to a healthy run of wild fall Chinook, with no supplemental hatchery population. Fish caught at the Pelton trap are returned to the lower river to spawn in the wild.
- This abundant population is culturally and ecologically significant — in addition to their importance to Native American tribes in the region, they make up more biomass than any other fish species in the Deschutes basin.

## Bull trout



Gray and green with small pale spots

- Bull trout (a member of the char family) are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act but are thriving in Lake Billy Chinook — one of the few locations where anglers can catch and keep the popular fish.

- Bull trout prefer clean, cold water. They are predators with a diet composed of mostly fish.

- There are anadromous bull trout populations outside of the Deschutes basin.