



Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout

Rio Grande Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii virginalis*; RGCT) is the southernmost occurring subspecies of Cutthroat Trout and is designated as New Mexico's state fish. RGCT are brilliantly colored, with brass colored sides transitioning to green and bronze toned backs complete with sparse spotting patterns. Many fish commonly display vibrant red coloration along their lower flanks and all RGCT possess a distinctive red-orange slash along their jawline.

RGCT occupy high-elevation headwater streams and lakes throughout southern Colorado and New Mexico. Due to the small waterbodies they inhabit, RGCT do not usually attain large sizes with mature fish generally reaching a maximum length of 10-12 inches. Fish mature at ages 3-5 and typically spawn in late May to early June during times of receding snowmelt runoff. They are generalist feeders, eating a variety of aquatic and terrestrial insects as well as the occasional fish. Like most trout species, RGCT require clean, cold water, ample riparian cover, and diverse in-stream cover to survive.

Historically, RGCT occupied streams throughout the Rio Grande, Canadian, and Pecos river basins. Unfortunately, RGCT currently occupy only 12% of their historic distribution due to interactions with nonnative trout species and widespread habitat loss.