Brown Trout are one of two species of trout that occur in the Canberra region. They generally occur in cooler upland streams. Brown Trout are native to Europe and western Asia and were first introduced in NSW in 1888 in the Queanbeyan, Molonglo, Naas and Cotter rivers. In the ACT, Brown Trout are found in the Murrumbidgee, Molonglo, Cotter, Paddys, Naas, Gudgenby and Orroral rivers and many of the small tributary streams. They are a popular angling species because they fight well, can be caught on artificial lures and are excellent to eat. Although self sustaining populations are common in streams in Australia, fisheries departments continue to stock this species to sustain recreational fisheries, particularly in environments where there is a lack of suitable natural spawning habitats.

Brown Trout are a thick bodied species with a big head and mouth and are silver in colour with dark brown or red spots and an olive green back. The colour varies depending on their age and habitat. They can grow to a size of 900 mm and up to 14 kg, but are generally less than 3-4 kg in the ACT. The most distinguishing characteristics of the Brown Trout include large black and sometimes reddish-orange spots with a pale border on the sides of the fish.

Brown Trout spawn in autumn and winter in areas with gravel beds where a depression is made in the gravel by the female. Females lay 300-5000 eggs, depending on their size and the eggs and the milt settle into the depression and the female covers the eggs with gravel. The eggs take several weeks to hatch depending on the temperature of the water. Brown Trout grow rapidly and may live to six years of age.

Brown Trout feed on a variety of food—small fish, terrestrial insects, molluscs, aquatic crustaceans and aquatic insects. Its introduction has led to the decline and fragmentation of populations of the Mountain Galaxias because of competition and predation. A recent survey (1990) has shown an inverse relationship between the numbers of Brown Trout and Mountain Galaxias in the Naas-Gudgenby catchment. In the Cotter catchment, Mountain Galaxias are rarely found in the presence of Brown trout. Brown Trout were also recorded feeding on Mountain Galaxias in Lake Burley Griffin when it was first filled.

Brown Trout are known to eat young Macquarie Perch and Trout Cod and stocking of Brown Trout has recently been stopped in Googong Reservoir because of its potential impact on Macquarie Perch.

The ACT Fisheries Act 2000 sets a bag limit of 5 and a size limit of 25 cm for Brown Trout.

Environment ACT Website: www.environment.act.gov.au
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