

Brown Trout



Scientific Name: *Salmo trutta*; *Salmo* is the genus name for Atlantic salmon, *trutta* is Latin for “trout”. Brown trout are closely related to Atlantic salmon.

Other Names: Brownie, German trout

Range:

Brown trout are not native to Maryland; in fact, they are not even native to North America. They are native to Western Europe and the British Isles and were brought to this country from Germany in the 1880s. They were ultimately introduced into 45 states, and have reproducing populations in 34 states, including Maryland.

In Europe, some populations of brown trout are anadromous. Like their cousin, the Atlantic salmon, they migrate into the ocean from coastal rivers and spend several years at sea before migrating back to fresh water to spawn.

In Maryland, there are naturally reproducing populations of brownies not far from Baltimore City in the Gunpowder watershed and the Jones Falls as well as in a number of other streams all over the state. They are also stocked in many other streams with suitable habitat.

Appearance:

Brown trout in Maryland tend to be brown or greenish on the back, yellowish on the sides and cream colored on the belly. Their body and dorsal fin are covered with dark spots which are surrounded by a light halo. A distinguishing feature of brown trout is the lack of dark spots on the caudal (tail) fin.

Brown trout tend to be larger than other trout. The average size is 14 to 24 inches and 2 to 10 pounds. In Maryland, they tend to be somewhat smaller, averaging 12 to 14 inches. The US record is a brownie caught in Michigan in 2010 which weighed 41 pounds 7 ounces. The largest caught in Maryland weighed 18 pounds 3 ounces and was caught in 2001 in the North Branch of the Potomac.

Habitat:

Brown trout, like other trout, prefer cold, well-oxygenated streams or lakes. However, they are more tolerant of warm temperatures and high turbidity than other trout. They are also resistant to many parasites, including the one that causes whirling disease. This gives them an advantage when competing with other species of trout, including the native brook trout and rainbow trout.



Diet:

Juvenile brown trout tend to feed largely on aquatic insects such as mayfly and caddisfly nymphs. Adults are more likely to feed on fish than other trout; they also eat worms, crayfish, mollusks, salamanders, frogs and even small birds and mice, if available. They prefer to feed at dusk or at night.

Reproduction:

Unlike Atlantic salmon, brown trout spawn each year once they are mature. Spawning habits are similar to that of brook trout, except that spawning takes place several weeks later than brook trout. The young grow rapidly until they reach sexual maturity at the age of 3 or 4. Their average life span is about 8 years.

When they occur in the same habitat, brown trout can often out-compete other trout species, especially the native brook trout. They grow more quickly and get larger than other trout; as a result, they can successfully compete with other trout for food (and, in the case of brook trout, for spawning sites). In addition, as adults they tend to feed largely on other fish, so smaller trout are often prey items. They are also resistant to the parasite which causes whirling disease, which gives them an advantage over brook and rainbow trout.

For a video of hatching brown trout: <http://www.arkive.org/brown-trout/salmo-trutta-fario/video-fa09b.html>

