

# FIELD JOURNAL



**Left: Game and Fish staff squeeze eggs out of a kokanee fish. Right: Game and Fish set up traps for kokanee in the river in order to collect eggs to be used to produce the fish at hatcheries for stocking. (Photos by Christopher Martin/WGFD)**

## Game and Fish collects kokanee eggs

Do you like to fish? You might be surprised to know the Wyoming Game and Fish Department has ten fish hatcheries and rearing stations that raise many species of fish to put in your favorite lakes, rivers and streams. This is called stocking fish. We stock over five million fish each year around the state!

Now that it is fall a few different species of fish are spawning--that is when a female fish lays eggs and a male fish fertilizes them. The eggs grow into baby fish. Spawning in the fall is special because most fish spawn in the spring. The kokanee salmon is one species of fish in Wyoming that spawns in the fall.

Because kokanee salmon like to travel back to the same place they hatched in the wild in order to spawn, it is hard to have them spawn at a fish hatchery. Instead, Game and Fish biologists on the statewide spawning crew set up traps in a few locations each fall to catch the

adult kokanee that are ready to spawn. Here is how they do it:

- As the biologists remove the fish from the trap, they separate the adult Kokanee into groups of males and females. Eggs from the female are collected first in a plastic bowl and then milt from the male is added. Last year, we collected about 570 eggs per female kokanee.
- The egg and milt mixture is swirled around to allow all the eggs to be fertilized before passing the eggs off to another member of the crew.
- Next, the bad eggs are separated from the rest, and salt water is added to the mix to help the eggs get fertilized.
- The fertilized eggs are loaded into coolers for two hours. Then, the eggs are strong enough to be safely transported to a fish hatchery to incubate, hatch, and grow throughout the winter and spring.
- The young fish are then stocked back into lakes in June and July at several locations around Wyoming including

New Fork Lake, Boulder Lake, Green River Lakes, Fontenelle Reservoir, Flaming Gorge Reservoir, Rob Roy Reservoir, Alcova Reservoir, Lake Hattie and more.

When kokanee hatch and grow into small fish in nature, only a small number survive. With the help of the statewide spawning crew and raising the eggs at a fish hatchery, almost all of the little fish survive! Wild spawning lets Game and Fish stock more kokanee each year, and it also means more kokanee return for us to spawn in future years.

If you like fishing for kokanee, now you know that Game and Fish helps you have more fish to catch in Wyoming.

To see a video of game and fish biologists spawning kokanee, visit this link online: [youtube.com/watch?v=px7DIVEkF8U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=px7DIVEkF8U).