

OUR Wildlife Heritage

EARLY FISH STOCKING

Remember the brook trout you caught in the mountains last summer? Do you think brook trout have always lived in Wyoming? They haven't. Brook trout are not native to Wyoming. How, then, did they get in our mountain lakes and streams? They were planted. Fish planting began in the 1880s. But for many years, tiny fish were carried to mountain lakes in old fashioned milk cans loaded on the backs of horses. It was slow and hard work. In the 1940s, the Game and Fish Department began dropping fish from airplanes. This was faster than bringing them in on horses, but it had some drawbacks. Sometimes the fish missed the target and didn't make it into the water. Later on, the Game and Fish tried helicopters. These worked better than airplanes for dropping fish because helicopters can hover in one place. Trucks do much of the

fish planting today. But for some remote mountain lakes, fish culturists still carry in containers full of fish on foot. If they could talk, the brookies in your creel might tell some wild stories about how they or their ancestors first got into the lake.



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The endangered Kendall Warm Springs dace.

Kendall Warm Springs—home of the Kendall dace.

SPECIAL FISH

Wyoming is home to some unusual and even rare fish. One of the most famous of these is the Kendall Warm Springs dace, a tiny, drab-colored fish from a small natural spring in western Wyoming, near the town of Pinedale. It lives nowhere else in the world. Since these fish are so few and special, they have been named an endangered species by the government. They are protected by law.

STATE FOSSIL

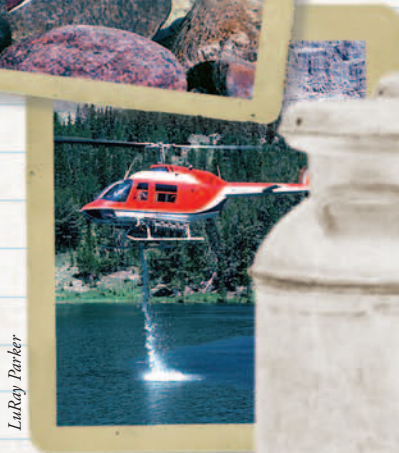
Wyoming's state fossil is Knightia, a fish named after a Wyoming geologist. Knightia was an ancestor of the ocean fish we call herrings today. It lived in what is now Lincoln County, Wyoming, 50 to 60 million years ago. At that time, the area was covered by water. Pictures of Knightia fossils appear somewhere in this issue of Wild Times. Can you find them? The answer is on page 8.

Fish were once carried to lakes in old fashion milk cans.



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Brook trout.



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Planting fish with a helicopter.



Courtesy of Wyoming State Archives