

## ~4. Fisheries and Wildlife~

Stream and upland conditions in the East Branch Delaware River watershed support numerous species of fish and wildlife. Their presence is an indicator of land cover types, land uses, and ecosystem health. This section briefly describes fish and wildlife species that are present.

### *FISH SPECIES*

Brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) and wild brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*) are the primary species found in the East Branch Delaware River and its tributaries. Brook trout do not grow as large as the brown trout in the basin. Chain pickerel (*Esox niger*) are occasionally caught by anglers. The riverine system also includes a variety of minnows including the closely related white sucker (*Catostomus commersoni*).



Figure 4.1 Brown trout (*Salmo trutta*)

Species common in the Pepacton Reservoir include brown trout, smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*), yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*), brown bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosus*) and rock bass (*Ambloplites rupestris*). On rare occasions rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) are noted. The alewife (*Alosa pseudoharengus*), a herring native to the lower mainstem Delaware and its tributaries, was introduced into the Pepacton Reservoir by bait pail and is very common.

The American eel's (*Anguilla rostrata*) migratory passage upriver was impeded by the Pepacton Reservoir. Eels do inhabit the East Branch Delaware River downstream of the reservoir, as do sea lamprey (*Petromyzon marinus*).

These fish are managed with statewide fishing regulations. No non-trout species are stocked in the river or reservoir.

### **Public Use and Angling**

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) routinely purchases public fishing rights along streams inhabited by trout but the number of access points and reaches with fishing rights are extremely limited in the Pepacton watershed. Fishing is permitted on State land within the Catskill Park with a valid New York State fishing license.

The Pepacton Reservoir is well known fishery and fishing is allowed by obtaining a permit from the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. NYC DEP Recreation Permits can be obtained on-line at:

[http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/watershed\\_protection/html/wsrecreation.html](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/watershed_protection/html/wsrecreation.html)

(Verified on September 27, 2007)

Permits can be requested by mail from NYCDEP Land Management – Access Permits, 71 Smith Avenue, Kingston, NY 12401, or by telephone (800) 575-5263. A New York State fishing license is required to fish on New York City lands.

The following web sites have information about fishing in Delaware County and on the East Branch of the Delaware. Please note that much of the information on these sites is specific to the waters below the Pepacton. Nonetheless, the information can be helpful to anglers fishing above the reservoir.

Delaware County Chamber of Commerce: Lists local fish tackle shops and contains a map of public fishing access points <http://www.delawarecounty.org/fishing/> (Verified on September 27, 2007)

Catskill Flies Inc: Provides information on current river conditions for the Catskills <http://www.catskillflies.com/stream.html> (Verified on September 27, 2007)

Upper Delaware Chapter of Trout Unlimited: <http://www.hancock.net/~udtu/> (Verified on September 27, 2007)

### **Fish Habitat Protection**

Laws are currently in effect that provide some protection to the bed and banks of the East Branch Delaware River and its tributaries, and also to its water quality. Permits are required for any work on the banks or in the bed of the stream, and for any discharge from a point source. Those laws do not change the fact that some land use patterns have altered the physical form of the river system. Protection and enhancement of the streamside vegetation helps to regulate temperature and provides important cover for the aquatic life. Stormwater controls, such as detention basins and environmentally engineered storm water outfalls, limit and mitigate the direct input of turbidity and pollutants from work sites and highways, and warm water from impervious surfaces. Restricting floodplain development can reduce the strain on aquatic habitat as well as protect homes, businesses and lives. Habitat protection also ensures that recreational and business opportunities are not compromised while maintaining a quality water supply and a good quality of life for watershed residents.

Please refer to **Recommendation #14** of **Volume 1** for suggested actions and research.

## *Wildlife*

Riparian corridors in the East Branch basin support a diverse community of wildlife species. Species mix ranges from predator to prey and commonly includes: white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*), eastern wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), eastern coyote (*Canis latrans*), red and gray foxes (*Vulpes vulpes* and *Urocyon cinereoargenteus*), eastern cottontailed rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*), muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), beaver (*Castor canadensis*), porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), mink (*Mustela vison*), striped skunk (*Mephitis mephitis*), raccoon (*Procyon lotor*), Great blue heron (*Ardea herodias*), turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*), American crow (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*), and various ducks, songbirds, hawks, owls, gulls, snakes, frogs, toads, salamanders, turtles, squirrels, chipmunks, mice, voles, bats, weasels, shrews, woodchucks, and black bear (*Ursus americanus*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*) and bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). The bald eagle population has been on the increase, particularly around the Pepacton Reservoir, during the past few years.

All these species depend on the stream and/or the floodplain and adjacent uplands for food, cover and shelter. Many of these species are managed as game species under jurisdiction of the NYSDEC Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, while others are permanently protected by state and federal legislation. On equal par with fish habitat protection is protection of streams and their adjacent floodplains. Again, habitat protection equates to good quality of life for watershed residents and enhances business and recreation opportunities.