ODNR - DIVISION OF WILDLIFE

Ohio's Steelhead Program

Steelhead in Ohio

- Steelhead are stocked Rainbow Trout that move between Lake Erie and Lake Erie tributaries.
- Native to the western United States and naturalized in the Great Lakes.
- Migrate into the tributaries from fall through spring.

Steelhead Stocking

- Steelhead eggs are collected from multiple wild strains and reared at the Castalia State Fish Hatchery.
- After 12 months, yearlings are 7-9" long and stocked into 7 Lake Erie tributaries during April and May.
- 450,000 steelhead are stocked annually by the Ohio Division of Wildlife.

Tributary Stream	County	# Stocked Annually
Vermilion River	Erie	50,000
Rocky River	Cuyahoga	80,000
Cuyahoga River	Cuyahoga	60,000
Chagrin River	Lake	80,000
Grand River	Lake	80,000
Ashtabula River	Ashtabula	50,000
Conneaut Creek	Ashtabula	50,000

Steelhead Fishing Information

- Steelhead can be caught in Lake Erie from May through September using spoons and lures.
- In the fall, anglers can find steelhead congregating along nearshore break walls, staging to run upriver.
- During fall through spring, steelhead can be caught in the tributaries using spinning and fly tackle with spoons, spinners, egg imitators, and fly patterns.

Life in Lake Erie

- Steelhead migrate out of stocked tributaries into Lake Erie weeks after stocking and typically migrate back to the tributaries after 2 or 3 years.
- Primary prey items while in Lake Erie include Shiners, Smelt, and Gobies.

Steelhead Growth:

YEARS IN LAKE	AVERAGE LENGTH (INCHES)	AVERAGE WEIGHT (POUNDS)
1	17	2-3
2	23	4-5
3	26	6-7
4	28	8-10

A World-Class Fishery

- Anglers travel from all Ohio counties, 20 states, Canada, and overseas to fish for Ohio's steelhead, according to a recent survey.
- Steelhead angling generates over $5M to local lakeshore economies in northeast Ohio.