

Kokanee Spawntake



Each fall, tens of thousands of kokanee salmon swim upstream during their spawning run from Blue Mesa Reservoir to

Roaring Judy. Upon arrival, kokanee eggs are collected by CPW employees, ensuring viable stocks for the future. The Roaring Judy Hatchery collects an average of 7.2 million eggs per year! This is the largest kokanee spawn in Colorado. The kokanee spawn at Roaring Judy also provides about 60% of the eggs needed by other state hatcheries to stock 26 lakes and reservoirs. Overall, kokanee production and fishing contribute an estimated \$29 million annually to the Colorado economy.



Roaring Judy employees carefully incubate and hatch the eggs every winter. After the kokanee grow to about two inches, they are released into the East River, where they immediately swim to Blue Mesa Reservoir. The kokanee will spend three to four years in the reservoir



before completing their life cycle with the spawning run.

You can see adult kokanee salmon swim upstream near

the fishing ponds in September and October. Male kokanee can be identified by their humped backs and large hooked jaws called kipe.

Rainbow Trout



Roaring Judy Hatchery currently raises a strain of rainbow trout that are resistant to whirling disease, a parasitic condition that causes the fish to “whirl” and die. Whirling disease has devastated wild stocks of rainbow over the past two decades. The WD-resistant rainbows, along with sensible stocking strategies, will hopefully curb the proliferation of the disease. These rainbows will be stocked in various lakes around Colorado via trucks that are specially equipped to haul live fish.

You can feed the rainbow trout in the concrete raceways. Fish food is available from hatchery personnel.



Roaring Judy State Fish Hatchery

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The Roaring Judy Hatchery

Colorado Parks and Wildlife purchased this property in 1963, and construction of the hatchery facilities began soon after. The hatchery began rearing trout in January of 1966. Roaring Judy encompasses 783 acres of state property along the East River. The name “Roaring Judy” was given by Gunnison school children when construction of the hatchery began.

Roaring Judy Creek flows from Cement Mountain across the valley and into the East River. Roaring Judy hatches, rears and stocks about 200,000 catchable 10-inch rainbow trout, 50,000 subcatchable 3-inch rainbow trout, and 3.1 million kokanee salmon fry per year. Additional species such as cutthroat and brown trout are raised periodically depending on fishery demands across the state.

CPW operates 19 hatcheries that breed, hatch, rear and stock over 90 million fish per year. Many of the fish produced are to enhance angling opportunities, while others serve a critical role in native species recovery efforts. Colorado fish hatcheries support our angling pastime, which annually contributes 1.9 billion dollars to our state’s economy!



Twenty years prior to its purchase by Colorado Parks and Wildlife, the property was operated as a mink farm.

Wildlife Viewing and Fishing

Many migrating birds land at Roaring Judy including bald eagles, kingfishers, trumpeter swans, osprey, blue herons and numerous songbird species. Mule deer, elk, mink, black bears, beavers and raccoons also frequently use the property. Use the map (blue stars) to find places with more information on wildlife.



Four public fishing ponds are located at the south end of the property. These ponds are stocked annually with rainbow trout. Statewide regulations apply at the fishing ponds. There are two miles of the East River on the hatchery property. This section of the East River is fishable by artificial flies and lures only. The bag limit is two fish under 12 inches. Taking of kokanee is prohibited. The East River is closed to fishing below the hatchery outlet downstream to the property line from August 1–October 31, to protect the kokanee spawning run.

