

Taxonomic change in rainbow trout scientific name

Salmo gairdneri (Richardson, 1836)
becomes
Oncorhynchus mykiss (Walbaum, 1792)

Although scientific names are given to organisms in order to give them a stable world-wide name, sometimes we find that an error has been made in the naming of a species, and so the name has to be changed.

When this occurs with rare or little-known species, it does not produce many problems. However, when it occurs with a common, wide-ranging fish which is also a popular food fish, it invariably produces some short-term confusion until the name changed is fully integrated into use. This has now occurred with the rainbow trout, usually called *Salmo gairdneri*. Smith and Stearley (*Fisheries*, 1989, vol. 14, 4-10) give conclusive evidence that its scientific name should be *Oncorhynchus mykiss*. Indeed these changes have been suggested as early as 1914 by C.T. Regan. Smith and Stearley base this decision upon osteology (palatine crest, supraetmoid, pro-otic, parasphenoid, post-orbitals, and dentary), biochemistry, hormonal changes, life history, and spawning season. The American Fisheries Society, American Society of Ichthyologists and Herpetologists' Committee on Names of Fishes has reviewed this data and voted unanimously to accept and follow it. C. Richard Robins, Chairman of this committee, has written (*Fisheries*, 1989, vol. 14, 5) : "The Committee has not endorsed these changes lightly, for it has an overriding interest in the stability of fish names. We consider the evidence supporting the changes too strong to dispute."

Although for a short time this name change will cause some confusion, in the long-terme it will produce added stability and clarity.

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