

## Lake Environments

A glance across the surface of one of the many South Platte Park lakes may give the impression that it's just a hole filled with water. However, lakes are actually very complex. Many lakes have three distinct layers that affect where fish hang out throughout the year. The upper layer, epilimnion, is heavily influenced by the weather. The frequent exposure to sunlight, cold air and wind make it vulnerable to temperature changes and mixing. The bottom layer of a lake, hypolimnion, is often more stable with colder and more dense water that is also very low in dissolved oxygen.

The middle layer, the metalimnion, also known as a thermocline, is critical to fish. Sunlight can only penetrate to a certain depth to warm the water. In the summer, increased temperatures continue to warm the upper layer of water, while the middle and lower layers stay cooler. The thermocline can form around 20 feet, with these lakes being a max of 30 feet deep. Depending on water clarity, that layer may be 7-10 feet thick. The temperature difference between the surface and the area below the thermocline can be as much as 10 or 15 degrees, with the transition as rapid as one degree per foot.

A thermocline can provide aquatic life the best of both worlds, serving as an air-conditioner to

resist the summer heat near the surface, but also providing higher levels of dissolved oxygen that the lower layer cannot provide. Sometimes plankton, minute floating invertebrates, at the thermocline can be so thick that it appears as a shaded band on a fish-finder. This makes the thermocline a cafeteria for a host of small fish, and the larger predatory fish that are seeking them.

The onset of winter cools the water in the upper layer, below the temperature of the lower layers. When this happens, the colder denser surface water sinks to the bottom of the lake causing an autumn turnover, or mixing, of the lake. This also happens in spring when ice melts into the water that is near freezing temperature and the dense water sinks. Nutrients are brought down into the depths of the lake, oxygen mixes throughout the system, water temperatures become more uniform, and often the thermocline disappears. As the layers form, cold water fish species begin to migrate back to the thermocline.

Next time you look at the surface of a placid lake or wade in its shallows, ask yourself if there is a layer somewhere out of sight that might be teeming with life in a world you can't see.

South Platte offers some beginning family and youth fishing classes. Check out [spsrd.org/nature](http://spsrd.org/nature) for upcoming offerings.



Post your catches & photos on South Platte Park's Facebook: [facebook.com/SouthPlatte Park](https://facebook.com/SouthPlattePark)

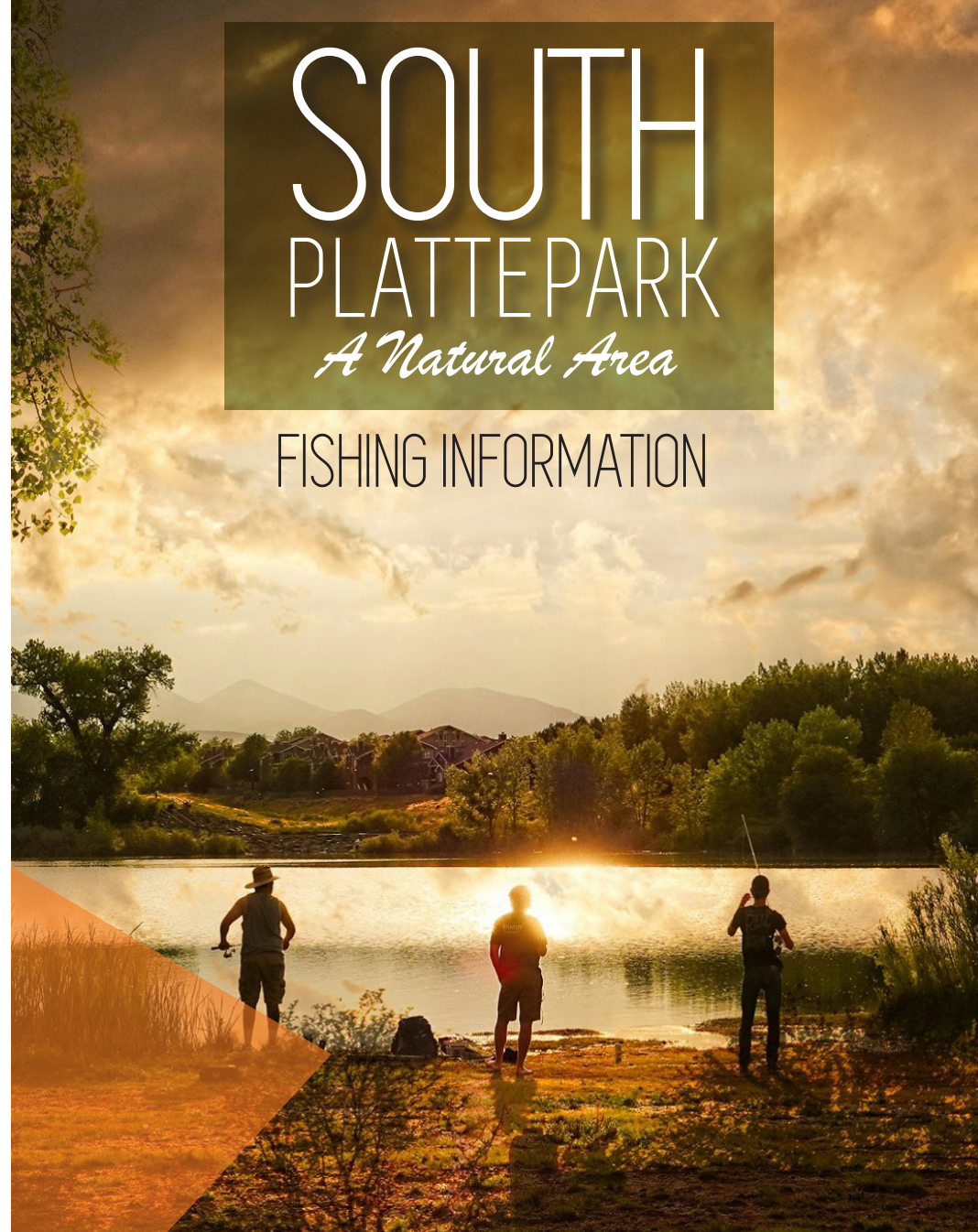
Booklet info current as of August 2021

Much thanks to SPPP volunteer Davis Peticolas for creating this helpful fishing pamphlet!

# SOUTH PLATTE PARK

*A Natural Area*

## FISHING INFORMATION



3000 W. Carson Dr.  
Littleton, CO 80120  
303.730.1022

[spsrd.org/nature](http://spsrd.org/nature)

[facebook.com/SouthPlattePark](https://facebook.com/SouthPlattePark)



## Fishing Laws

It is your responsibility to know and understand the Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) rules and regulations before going out to fish.

CPW fishing information can be obtained at: <https://cpw.state.co.us/thingstodo/Pages/Fishing.aspx>

- No boats or belly boats are allowed in South Platte Park (SPP) lakes. Boats are allowed in the river.
- Fishing season is year-round.
- Everyone fishing in public waters must have a valid fishing license, except:
  - (1) those under 16 years of age,
  - (2) during the first full weekend of June each year, and
  - (3) "Colorado residents on active duty with U.S. armed forces out of state can fish free without a license while here on temporary leave, max. 30 days a year. You must carry official leave papers while fishing."
- The only CPW-approved special regulation in SPP waters is a 15" minimum size limit for largemouth and smallmouth bass south of Mineral Ave.
- All fish limits follow CPW general statewide regulations. The following are daily bag and possession limits:

	<b>Daily Limit</b>	<b>Possession Limit</b>
Trout - in Aggregate	4	8
Walleye	5	5
Bass (largemouth/smallmouth)	5	5
Bluegill/Sunfish - in Aggregate	20	20
Yellow Perch	20	20
Channel Catfish	10	10
Bullfrogs	unlimited	unlimited
Crayfish	unlimited*	unlimited*

\*Crayfish are diminishing in size & quantity in SPP. Consider limiting your catch size.

- It is illegal to have or harvest "non-game species," including plains topminnow, darters, leopard frogs and mollusks in our area.
- Archery is considered a projectile weapon by local ordinance and SPP rules and is not permitted.
- Gigs are permitted for carp, suckers and bullfrogs.
- Chumming is prohibited statewide.
- Taking of bait fish from natural waters is locally prohibited.
- Seining for crayfish is also prohibited.
- Bullfrogs are a non-native species, harvest as many as you can.

## WARNING – DANGER

**The lakes in South Platte Park (SPP) were all formed from gravel mining pits; as such they generally have steep and unstable sides. All the lakes are at least 16 feet deep. Wading out from shore can be dangerous as the gravelly soil can collapse underfoot dumping you into deeper water. .**

**Fish from shore in winter. Ice fishing is not recommended in South Platte Park lakes. Warmer water from the river travels rapidly through the gravelly soils and can well up in a lake, making ice conditions unpredictable.**

## South Platte Park Information for Fishermen

The lakes in South Platte Park (SPP) are periodically stocked by the Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Information about when and where the stockings occur is available at:

<https://cpw.state.co.us/thingstodo/Pages/StockingReport.aspx>

Some of the lakes in South Platte Park have been improved with shoreline wetlands, aquatic plants, cottonwood trees, and submerged habitat shelters.

Below about 7 feet deep, very few plants grow to provide food or shelter for aquatic life. Since most SPP's lakes are 20 - 35 feet deep, there was little structure or shelter. Many artificial structures have been placed in the lakes to enhance places for fish to hide from predators, to find food and to improve the fishing opportunities. These structures include:

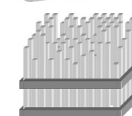
**Cribs** - log cabin crossed log structures which may be hollow, or filled with broken rock or concrete to provide hiding places.



**Concrete Pipes** - create hiding places for large catfish and other bottom-dwellers or fish that prefer darker places.



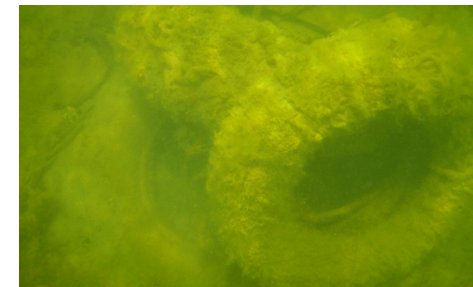
**Stakebeds** - vertical slats create spaces for small fish to escape predators.



**Tire Wheels** - provide crevices for small fish and crawdads to hide.



**Sunken trees and brush piles** - concrete helps keep these structures on the bottom where they create places for algae to grow and fish to hide.

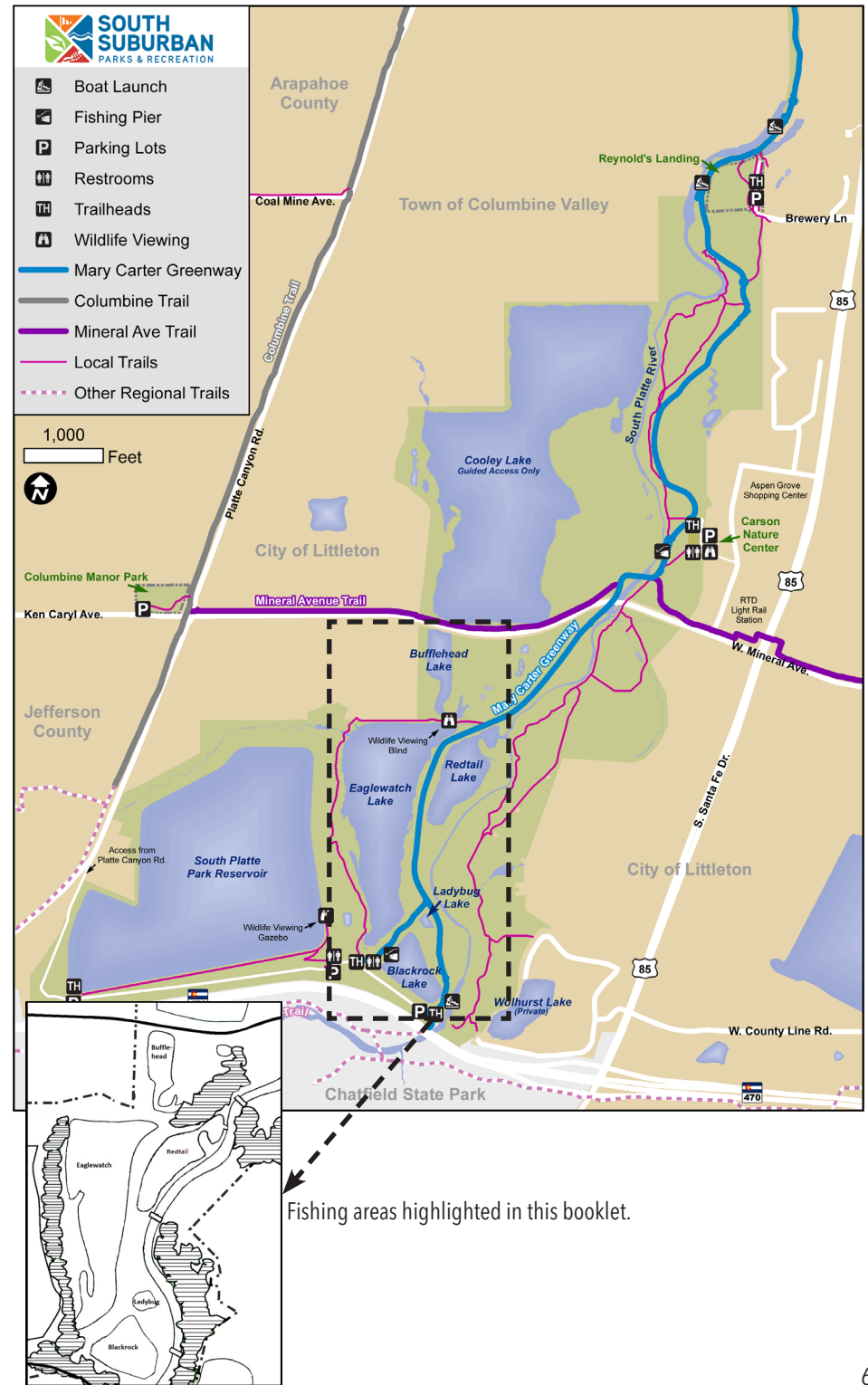


# Sport Fish in South Platte Park

Based on fishing reports and periodic census.

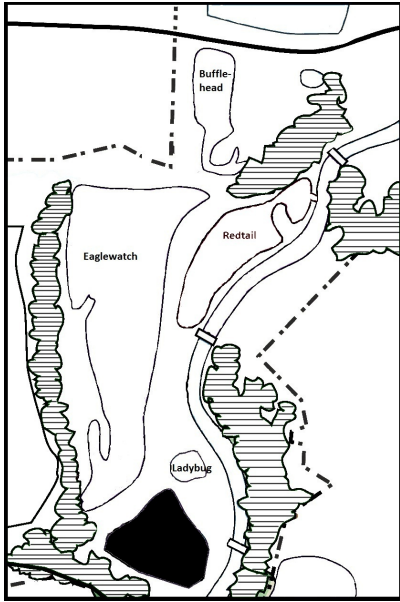
	River	Blackrock Lake	Eaglewatch Lake	Redtail Lake	Ladybug Lake	Bufflehead Lake	Cooley Lake
Acreage	na	7.4	41.7	12.0	0.4	6.4	138.3
Deepest Spot (feet)	na	37	30	30	16	19	na
Shoreline (feet)	25,000	2400	7900	3300	500	3000	14000
Additional Information	p7	p6	p8	p9	p7	p7	No public access allowed
Bass, Largemouth	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Bass, Smallmouth		X	X	X			Fishing is not allowed in Cooley Lake. This is a restricted wildlife area.
Bluegill and Green Sunfish	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Carp	X		X	X		X	
Channel Catfish	X	X	X	X			
Trout, Brown	X						
Trout, Rainbow	X		X	X			
Walleye	X		X	X			
White Sucker	X	X	X	X			
Yellow Perch		X	X			X	

South Platte Reservoir is a drinking water supply, no fishing is permitted.



Fishing areas highlighted in this booklet.

## Blackrock Lake



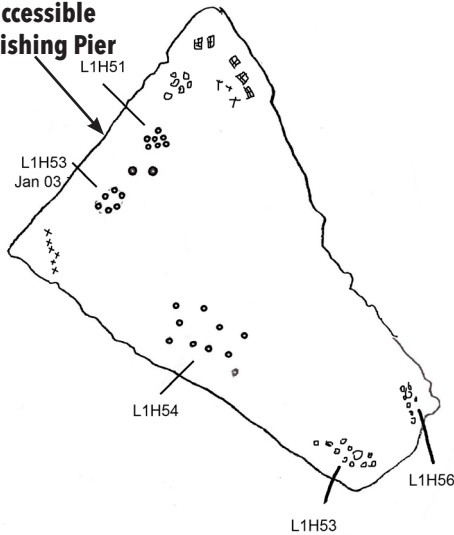
7.4 acres  
37 ft deep  
2,400 ft of shoreline

### Sport Fish

- Bluegill and Green Sunfish
- Channel Catfish
- Largemouth Bass
- Smallmouth Bass
- Walleye
- White Sucker
- Yellow Perch



### Handicap accessible Fishing Pier



### Habitat improvements made as indicated.

GPS coordinates for

L1H51:

- 135 0496362
- UTM 4379919

L1H54:

- 135 0496401
- UTM 4379806

L1H52:

- 135 0496347
- UTM 4379909

L1H55:

- 135 0496494
- UTM 4379740

L1H53:

- 135 0496327
- UTM 4379868

L1H56:

- 135 0496535
- UTM 4379790

## South Platte River (below Chatfield)

25,040 ft of shoreline

Find current river flow rate by searching for PLACHACO on a web browser.

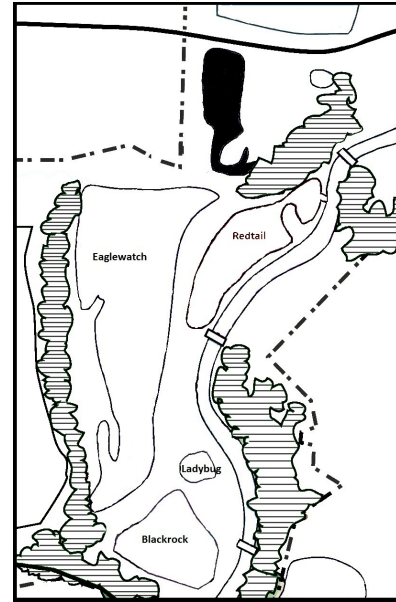
### Sport Fish

- Bluegill and Green Sunfish
- Brown Trout
- Channel Catfish
- Common Carp
- Largemouth Bass
- Rainbow Trout
- Walleye
- White Sucker



The entire stretch of river is open to fishing. North of Mineral, the west shoreline is limited to the active channel only, with a closed wildlife area on the upper bank. Accessible fishing platforms are available immediately west of Carson Nature Center.

## Bufflehead Lake



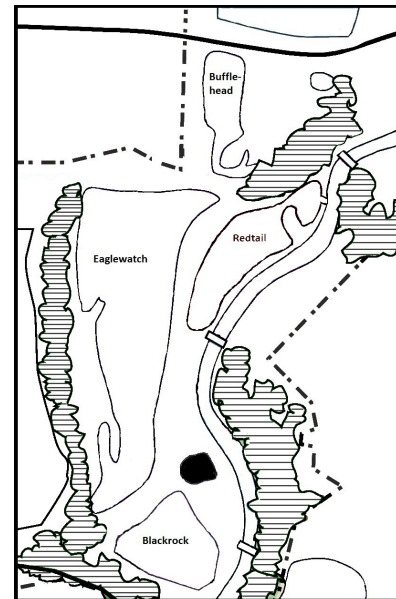
64 acres  
19 ft deep  
3,040 ft of shoreline

### Sport Fish

- Bluegill and Green Sunfish
- Grass Carp
- Largemouth Bass
- Perch, Yellow



## Ladybug Lake

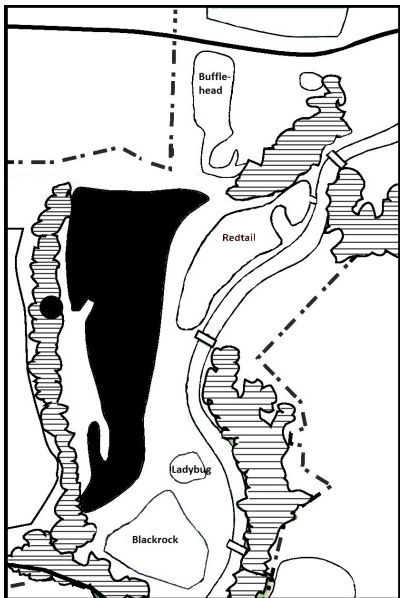


0.4 acres  
16 ft deep  
480 ft of shoreline

### Sport Fish

- Bluegill and Green Sunfish
- Largemouth Bass
- Smallmouth Bass

## Eaglewatch Lake



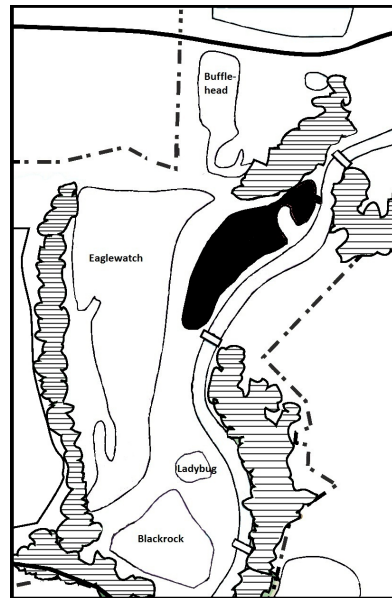
41.7 acres  
30 ft deep  
7,920 ft of shoreline

### Sport Fish

- Bluegill and Green Sunfish
- Channel Catfish
- Common Carp
- Largemouth Bass
- Rainbow Trout
- Smallmouth Bass
- Walleye
- White Sucker



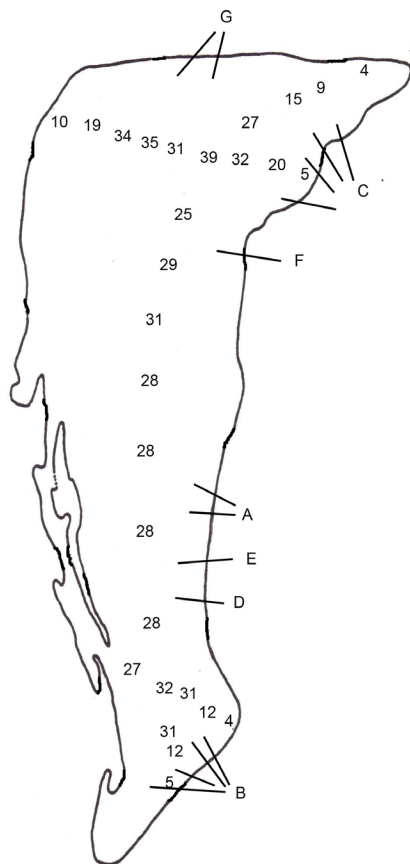
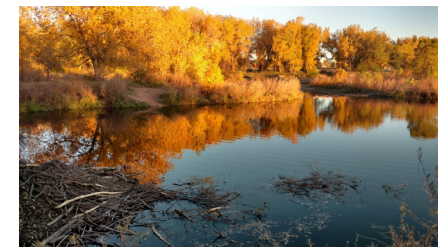
## Redtail Lake



12.0 acres  
30 ft deep  
3,280 ft of shoreline

### Sport Fish

- Bluegill and Green Sunfish
- Channel Catfish
- Common Carp
- Largemouth Bass
- Rainbow Trout
- Smallmouth Bass
- Walleye
- White Sucker

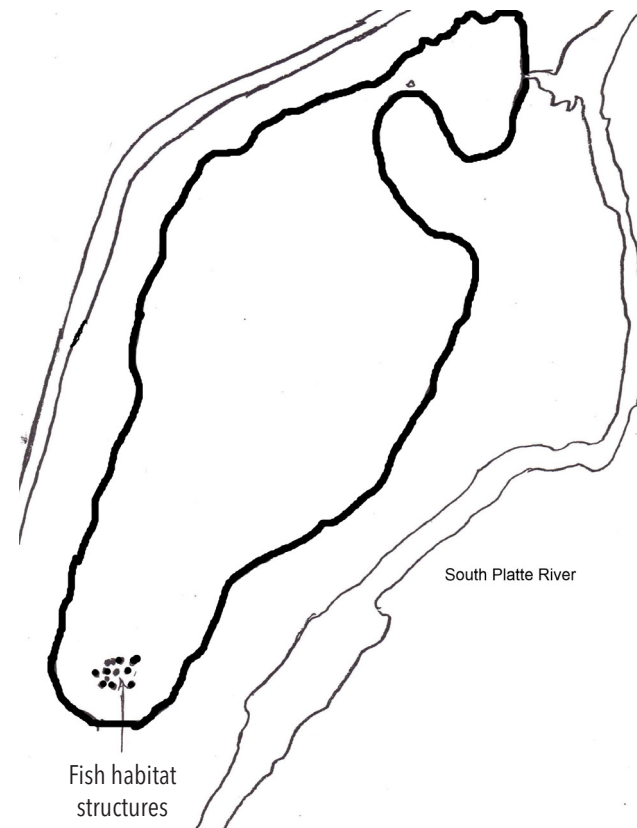


### Habitat Improvements and depth soundings.

- A = Brush Piles
- B = Individual/Tandem Larger Logs
- C = Tire Structures
- D = Crib Structures
- E = Stake Beds
- F = Pipe
- G = Shade Structures



If you are fishing Eaglewatch in the winter be sure to occasionally scan the tops of the cottonwood trees on the west side for eagles.



## Aquatic Critters

Lurking under the surface of SPP's water are many species of scaly animals covered with a layer of slimy mucous. Are these phantoms or fish? The fish you'll find include rainbow and brown trout, largemouth bass, channel catfish, bluegill, yellow perch and walleye. Surprisingly, none of these are native to the waters of our area. So, which of our fishy friends were here historically? Little fish like white and long-nose suckers, Iowa and Johnny darters, creek chubs, long-nose dace, shiners, stonerollers and other minnows are native. Some of those little fish are still here, but the exotic sport fish are the ones that bring out anglers in every season.

### Rainbow Trout

As the ice fades in March, rainbow trout are cruising the lakeshores and make for good fishing in Eaglewatch Lake. They start biting early because they're hungry from their winter fast. They feed mostly on aquatic invertebrates, small fish and other organisms. Start fishing with dry flies in early spring, then resume in the fall. If you're a bait fisher, you can do so whenever; especially during the summer when trout are in deeper, cooler water.

### Largemouth Bass

Bass are fish eaters and feisty during May. At that time, they're hunting, setting up territories and spawning at near-shore weed beds. Fishing can be particularly successful with any lure or bait that looks like a big, tasty critter; they even eat crawdads! Crawdads eat a lot of dead and decomposing organic material and pass their energy up the food chain. Remember that SPP has a 15" minimum size limit on bass. Try fishing in Blackrock, Eaglewatch, Redtail or Bufflehead.

### Bluegill

In June, during their spawning, little bluegill start picking flies off the surface. Try fly and bobber fishing at this time in Bufflehead. Along with perch, bluegill can be taken near the ice in winter by jigging a piece of worm.

### Channel Catfish

In summer, when other fish are chilling out down deep in the lake, catfish are spawning and getting happy in the warmer water. They forage near the bottom or in dark areas and eat most anything dead or alive.

### Yellow Perch

Yellow perch eat worms, small aquatic insects and larvae, plus other little organisms. They are best caught with a little piece of worm near the ice in winter or from a fishing platform.

### Walleye

Walleye can offer a surprise find in South Platte Park. The lucky angler might meet one that has washed out of Chatfield and found its way into Redtail, since it's connected to the river and some have been caught in Eaglewatch Lake. They have big teeth to feed voraciously on fish. A reflective layer in their eye called a tapetum lucidum improves their vision in the low light conditions of deep water. Since they like cool water, late Spring and Fall are the best times to fish for them.

### Other aquatic organisms

Lurking beneath the surface include bullfrogs and their tadpoles, carp and Asian, or Corbiculid, clams. Bullfrogs, originally prized for their legs, are hardy and voracious nuisance predators. They'll eat anything that smells or looks tasty,

walks, swims or crawls and fits in their mouth. Frightening, huh? They're SPP's largest frog; it's a good thing they only grow to 2 pounds. Grass carp, known for their relentless plant and algae consumption, have been stocked into Bufflehead. Common carp were introduced from China as a fine food fish. Have you ever tried them? Carp can weigh more than 25 pounds and can overpopulate and compete with native species. Common carp are sometimes seen spawning in lakes or are caught in the river with bait. Asian clams are prolific and filter microscopic plants and animals from the water column.

Remember that all state fishing regulations apply in South Platte River including the general bag and possession limits. A valid fishing license is required. A court summons is a bad way to end a fishing trip.



Largemouth Bass



Smallmouth Bass



Channel Catfish



Walleye



Yellow Perch



Bluegill



Grass Carp



Common Carp



Rainbow Trout



Brown Trout



Green Sunfish



Bullfrog