

Discovering Lake Trout Secrets in the Deeps of Elk Lake

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This short video essay, tells the story of Lake Michigan's lake trout populations and the efforts to restore this iconic species of fish.

In the 1930s and 40s, sea lamprey made their way up the St. Lawrence Seaway through the shipping canals and spread into the Great Lakes. Within 20 years, predation by legions of parasitic lamprey coupled with commercial over fishing had wiped out all of Lake Michigan's native populations of lake trout.

All this time, fisheries scientists and resource managers have believed that there were no remnants of Lake Michigan's original populations of lake trout left anywhere in the basin. But that changed with the confirmation that a team from MDNR's Charlevoix Fisheries Research Station led by Jory Jonas had discovered a unique, self-sustaining population of lake trout in Antrim County's Elk Lake. They have concluded that Elk Lake has been harboring a remnant of Lake Michigan's native population of lake trout for all these years.

Topics Covered

Fish; Fisheries; History; Habitat; Habitat Restoration

Next Generation Science Standards

- 2-LS4-1. Make observations of plants and animals to compare the diversity of life in different habitats.
- 3-LS4-3. Construct an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.
- MS-LS1-5. Construct a scientific explanation based on evidence for how environmental and genetic factors influence the growth of organisms.
- HS-LS4-5. Evaluate the evidence supporting claims that changes in environmental conditions may result in: (1) increases in the number of individuals of some species, (2) the emergence of new species over time, and (3) the extinction of other species.