



RUNNING A TROUT HATCHERY is a full time business, as these pictures show. Feeding, top left, is an all-important matter, of course, as is properly mixing the feed, top right. Cleanliness is a "must" with the men and constant hosing and washing down of equipment and working space is daily routine, center left. It takes a lot of bu-

kets to hold the feed, center right, and after it is all done there are still the pools to be cleaned, lower left. But at the end there is the satisfaction of starting a fresh crop and getting in the supplies, lower right, to do it all over again.

Klamath Trout Hatchery Busy Place During Operations

By PAULINE BROUGHTON

About 32 miles north of Klamath Falls, on Crater Lake Highway between Klamath Agency and Fort Klamath, lies the Klamath Trout Hatchery. This hatchery ranks third in the state in number of fish produced annually. If you have never visited a state fish hatchery, you may be in for a surprise. Visiting hours are from 8 to 5 o'clock daily, and the superintendent or one of the hatchery workers on duty is always glad to answer questions for you.

The hatchery is on Crooked Creek, one-half mile off the paved highway. Several large springs furnish a year round supply of cold pure water of 46 to 48 degrees in temperature. No brood stock is kept here, but over a million mackinaw, rainbow and eastern brook eggs are obtained from other sources throughout the state for hatching and rearing. The rainbow eggs come mostly from other hatcheries. Mackinaw in former years were obtained from Odell Lake, but that practice has been discontinued. Most of the eastern brook eggs come from East Lake.

Normal spawning season occurs in late fall or early spring, and the hatchery is in operation from December through February, and again during June and July. The men are busy at present spawning the trout that have been trapped at Diamond Lake. A female trout may produce from one to 3,000 eggs, while the sperm from

one male is sufficient to impregnate the eggs from three females. A spawned-out female is about as flabby and unattractive as a discarded handbag.

The hatchery building contains row after row of waist high tanks through which water flows constantly. The eggs to be hatched are first dipped in a disinfectant solution to reduce possible fungus growth and to toughen the outer shell, then placed in wire baskets or hatching trays. The hatching process requires 70 days here, though in some hatcheries where the water temperature is higher the hatching time is shorter.

The trout eggs are about the size of a small pea, and range in color from cream to orange, lighter than salmon eggs. During the incubation period, the infertile eggs are removed every few days. It is easy to pick out the bad eggs, as they are more whitish in color.

As the hatching cycle continues, the eggs reach the "eyed" stage—and a tiny black dot appears. When the puffy-sized fish finally hatch, a bit of the egg continues to cling to them for a few days. When the egg sac disappears, the tiny fish reach the "swim-up" stage and are then fed raw liver, ground extremely fine, about six times a day. Later, feeding is cut to four times daily, and eventually to three times a day. Klamath hatchery releases annually something like 700,000 fry and fingerlings, plus an estimated 125,000 rainbow and 90,000 lake trout of

catchable size. The fish that were hatched this past winter will be released in the southeast section of the state in July and August.

It requires an enormous amount of feed to keep the fish growing. Twice a week one of the men collects from a local packing house all of the beef viscera that is available. This fresh meat is ground at the hatchery and mixed with such other things as cotton seed meal, salt, fish meal, dried milk, etc. Hatcheryman Joe Bray usually attends to the feed grinding detail.

It takes the combined efforts of four full time employees in addition to the superintendent to run the hatchery. With the exception of Joe Bray, all of the men live on the hatchery grounds, as the operation must never be left unattended. In addition to feeding the fish, the ponds must be cleaned twice a week (there are 22 of these ponds!) The cleaning is accomplished by lowering the water level and scrubbing the sides and bottoms with long handled brushes. Hatcherymen Jerry Raber and Bill Broughton usually draw this detail.

In addition to the biweekly cleaning, the ponds must be completely drained and allowed to dry once a year, after which they are painted with a special paint to keep down growth of algae. During the icy winter months, an occasional slippery pond wall causes one or another of the men to get an unwanted cold bath! Contrary to the ideas of some visitors, the few ponds that are roofed are not to

keep the workers out of the snow but are built to shade the lake trout. These fish, accustomed to the dimness of deep water, go blind in the shallow ponds if they are not covered.

There are six such hatcheries through central Oregon, starting with one at Hood River, one near Tygh Valley, Wizard Falls on the Metolius, Fall River, southwest of Bend, our own Klamath and Diamond Lake hatcheries, operated only during the summer months. Next time you are near one of these locations, stop in for a visit at one of these fish factories. It will be an interesting experience.

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